

**DRAWING THE LINES: INDIGENOUS AMERICAN LEDGER DRAWINGS  
AND THE DECOLONIZATION OF RHETORICAL KNOWLEDGE SPACES**

BY

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the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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## ABSTRACT

### DRAWING THE LINES: INDIGENOUS AMERICAN LEDGER DRAWINGS AND THE DECOLONIZATION OF RHETORICAL KNOWLEDGE SPACES

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This project explores the transrhetorical conversations that take place between the material presences of ledger art across three discursive spaces. Ledger art is a visually-based narrative art form of expression that originated among Native American Plains tribes. Often characterized by its materiality, historical and contemporary ledger artists use a variety of media to mediate their drawings—from ledger pages to land deeds and composition notebooks. Particularly, this project considers the material-rhetorical presences of ledger drawings held in the Kansas Historical Society Archives and the *Unbound: Narrative Art of the Plains* exhibit at the National Museum of the American Indian in New York City. The ledger art of these spaces is placed into dialogue with the materials and metadiscourses that surround them in order to understand the action, motion, and moment of the ledger drawings within and across these spaces. These observations are then situated in relationship to personal conversations with contemporary ledger artists, considering the ways that artists see ledger art created, mediated, and mitigated. Utilizing and complicating Carole Blair’s heuristic for material rhetorics, with mindfulness of indigenous and decolonial methodologies, what emerges from this project is a more nuanced understanding of the relationships between materialities across spaces, communities, cultures, and times while furthering our understandings of decolonial transrhetorical movement and connections within the field of rhetoric and composition.

## **DEDICATION**

For my mother  
and my grandmothers,  
for my father,  
and my grandfathers.

Thank you.

Hoping for more good days.

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“Decolonial thinking and doing [is] the enunciation of engaging in epistemic disobedience and delinking from the colonial matrix in order to open up decolonial options—a vision of life and society that requires decolonial subjects, decolonial knowledges, and decolonial institutions.”

– Walter Mignolo, *The Dark Side of Western Modernity*

“I draw because words are too unpredictable. I draw because words are too limited. If you speak and write in English, or Spanish, or Chinese, or any other language, then only a certain percentage of human beings will get your meaning. But when you draw a picture everybody can understand it. If I draw a cartoon of a flower, then every man, woman, and child in the world can look at it and say, “That’s a flower.”

– Sherman Alexie, *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*

## CHAPTER ONE

### **Material, Method, and Theory: Ledger Drawings, Rhetorical Knowledge Spaces, and Decolonial Rhetoric**

*There are three white tents that border the pow wow grounds at Haskell Indian Nations University. The annual art market is in full-swing, intertribal drum beats thumping over the loudspeakers while hundreds of people work their way through the crowds. It is a hot September day and that heat has everyone carrying fans and pulling at their t-shirts, sweat drenching their backs.*

*It is my second time at the market. Having only moved to Lawrence the two years before, I have never been one for going to unfamiliar places alone. Experiences are almost always better in groups, with others. A fellow graduate student tags along with me that day and, after a helping of fry bread, we work our way past the crowded stalls in the first tent. I remember.*

*“There are stories here,” he says. And that catches my attention. I turn, focusing on the images that are drawn atop different bits of paper, different things—a page of music as I might’ve once seen in the old hymnals at the family church, a land deed with all the pomp and circumstance and frills of ‘land ownership,’ a lined page with names and dates and prices paid. I’ve never seen anything like those drawings before, so I ask the man behind the table: “What’re those stories?”*

*“This is a wonderful story,” the museum ambassador says with a wave of her gnarled hand as she gestures toward a painted buffalo hide. The man selling his artwork at an art market and the museum tour guide are talking to each other, it seems. They don’t know it, but they are speaking to each other. She’s in a big city museum, settled in the shadow of skyscrapers, and he’s at a local event. Three years separated, twelve-hundred miles apart.*

*I hear her voice over a Facebook application that sends out a live broadcast when it is activated. While in my Kansas apartment, surrounded by books and articles and images, I listen to her repeat the same refrain with each transition through the Unbound: Narrative Art of the Plains exhibit at the National Museum of the American Indian in New York City.*

*“Listen to this story. It’s from a long time ago—”*

*“It’s a tradition, you know. We’ve been doing this for a long time.”*

*I am curious, glancing between the artist and the drawings. The tent is sweltering and the drums are loud. The emcee is cracking jokes, encouraging people to join the raffle. Never before had I heard of “ledger drawings,” or “ledger art.” He gave me an overview of the history associated with the form, how closely it was linked to traditions and to the push of colonialism and the establishment of reservations.*

*“Lots of history here.”*

*I go to look up the history when I return home, landing on the webpage for the Kansas Historical Archives. Local drawings with a complex history.*

*The Kansas Historical Archives curates images of ledger drawings from the nineteenth century, around the same time that the tradition started. The archive’s tags confuse me, shock me, as I peruse through the online database. The drawing I purchased from the artist at the art market tells another story. It is tacked onto the wall above my desk. I see something different in the archives than on the pow wow grounds at Haskell or eventually, the museum in the heart of New York City.*

*Different spaces. Different materials. Different people and communities. Different times.*

*Yet, they all seem to speak to each other.*

## Sovereign Narratives: A Brief History of Ledger Art

Above my desk, there is a ledger drawing<sup>1</sup> print purchased from the gift shop at the National Museum of the American Indian in New York City. In Dolores Purdy-Corcoran's individual style of bright prisma color pencils and india ink, a horse and rider run across a ledger page. There are symbols I do not recognize and significances that I cannot know in that image, yet I sit back when I am troubled in my writing and find a center in the drawing, in the colors and the movement. Above Corcoran's technicolor piece is the ledger drawing I purchased from Raul Davis on the pow wow grounds at Haskell—the first ledger art piece I had ever encountered. Warriors chase cavalrymen off their land and off the page, in muted reds and blacks and yellows and purples. I look at these images and am reminded of how much I do not know. How much I still have to learn. How very little I can understand from my limited experience. And yet, there are narratives than I *can* understand in these images. There is movement in the drawings, as the horses are propelled across the page. These drawings are far more active than their places on the wall above my desk.

And they are more active than their spaces in the metal-cornered boxes of archives and on the walls of museum galleries.

It's that action—that *movement*—that reminds me where I must begin.

Narrative art has been a method of expression among Native people in North America for generations. Particularly among those nations that moved through the Plains, pictographic representations were etched onto stone, hide shirts, robes, leggings, and shields, along the hide of

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<sup>1</sup> I will be using the terms *ledger drawing* and *ledger art* interchangeably. Richard Pearce, in *Women and Ledger Art: Four Contemporary Native American Artists*, notes that that *ledger art* is the term most often used regarding this tradition, as a general reference to the form. He makes the distinction that *ledger drawings* are in reference particularly to those drawings done on paper (xiv). Occasionally, the term *narrative art* will be used. This will reference the ledger drawing/ledger art tradition while also including various other material presentations of the Plains pictographic style, such as *war shirts*, *warrior art*, and *winter counts*.

tipis, and eventually, with the violent encroachment of colonial forces, on paper (Berlo; Low; McCleary; Pearce; Peterson; Szabo). The subject matter of narrative art is vast. Ceremonies, such as the Grass Dance, are often depicted with dancers, weapons, dress, and scenes moving along the materials, be they hide or muslin (Keyser and Klassen 277). Animals, too, are often drawn with certain features emphasized, such as the humps of buffalo and the hooves of horses. As Edwin Wade notes, images also denote various tribal affiliations through specific hairstyles, clothing, or symbols near the individuals (187). Many theorists, historians, and anthropologists (Native and otherwise) hold that the ledger drawing form was most often employed by warriors among the Plains nations as a way of chronicling achievements, deeds, and courtships. These images often act as mnemonic devices, signaling meanings or narratives to different audiences. While one image may cue an individual achievement (such as a particular battle, hunt, or raid), another may symbolize loved ones, and still another symbol may indicate a specific narrative associated with the community at large.

Within the larger and longer tradition of narrative art, ledger drawings are a transitional form of expression in which the pictographic images that were once on hide and muslin are instead drawn onto paper. The Plains Indian Ledger Art archive describes the change in material culture and the effects that change had on the representational painting style: “traditional paints and bone and stick brushes used to paint on hide gave way to new implements such as colored pencils, crayon, and occasionally water color paints.” Pencils, crayons, and water color paints eventually led to the implementation of markers as new styles are developed. Ledger art (another term for “ledger drawings”) maintained its pictographic narrative heritage while also innovating new forms, styles, and materials. With the “reservation era,” ledger art became a popular form of recording-keeping, storytelling, and entrepreneurship among Native peoples. Of particular

importance to an overview history of ledger art are the drawings that originated from Cheyenne, Kiowa, Comanche, Arapaho, and Caddo prisoners of war held at Fort Marion in Florida. For example, Figure 1.1 is a drawing by Bear's Heart, a Southern Cheyenne prisoner held at Fort Marion. The Plains ledger art style is clearly articulated here through the flat pictographic imagery and colors, depicting a buffalo hunt. The Fort Marion ledger books and drawings are often referenced as the "starting point" for what is defined in modern times as "ledger art" by scholars and artists. The art of the men at Fort Marion is also often mentioned by contemporary artists as an inspiration for their current work. The creations of the artists at Fort Marion is the subject of extensive scholarly examination, including discussions of patronage, imprisonment and economy, and material culture (Berlo and Earnfight; Gercken; McLafferty; Szabo; Werner). Ultimately, though the ledger drawings of the Fort Marion prisoners were not necessarily the first ledger art to be created, they serve as common touchstone among scholars and artists alike. Discussion of the Bear's Heart and Zotom ledgers (two well-known ledger notebooks originating from Fort Marion) will be included in Chapter Three as these two ledgers were displayed in the *Unbound: Narrative Art of the Plains* exhibit as historical examples of the form, acting as transition pieces from historical antecedents to contemporary expressions.

Ledger drawings can be both incredibly personal and yet, extremely embedded in community. This will become increasingly clear in the examples discussed later in this dissertation. There is an overlap between the personal and the public in ledger drawings, depending on what audience is being cued. The drawings carry power, as Denise Low-Weso notes in her research regarding Cheyenne warrior drawings. She explains: "Unique Indigenous philosophical concepts emerge from the texts, especially representations of power or 'medicine.'" The markings invoke texts of military record, history, natural history, literature, art, and

spirituality. They are beautiful images with multiple layers of simultaneous impact” (85). The dynamic nature of ledger drawings can be seen in this movement between layers of meaning in the interaction that takes place between symbols on the materials, the message and the medium, and between the images and the audience. Today, those narratives and materials are as diverse as the people who create them: from the dull reds, yellows, greens, and blues of traditional tools to the bright rainbows of primacolor pencils—a full and varied spectrum.

Past or present, narrative art was and is an embodiment of sovereign Native expression. The ledger drawing form, in particular, arose from the first years of the “reservation era,”<sup>2</sup> when ledger art became a method of preserving and articulating indigenous identity in the face of colonial aggression (Low and Powers 6-7). They became embodiments, etchings, the full-color images of indigenous rhetorical sovereignty, during a time when such sovereignty was being actively oppressed and the people enacting systematically massacred. As Scott Richard Lyons defines it: rhetorical sovereignty is “the inherent right and ability of peoples to determine their own communicative needs and desires in this pursuit, to decide for themselves the goals, modes, styles, and languages of public discourse” (449) — and this is present in every image drawn. And that sovereignty is pressed into every penciled line, in the grooves of the pencil as it moves along the paper, and in every chosen color, blend, and movement in the images. Gerald Vizenor discusses the “transmotion” of ledger drawings as “a creative connection to the motion of horses depicted in winter counts and heraldic hide paintings” and that the horses represented in the drawings are in motion—directly linking to the lived “memories and consciousness” of the

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<sup>2</sup> The dates of what is referred to as the “reservation era” vary from source to source. Cited as following the Indian Removal Act of 1830 and the subsequent “removal era,” which spanned from 1830 to 1850, what is perceived as the “reservation era” spanned from roughly 1850 to 1887. In the Kansas State Historical Society archives, the “reservation era” spans the years between 1829 and 1854, when “these emigrant tribes were [...] moved again following the “Settlement and Immigration” period.

artists themselves (179). Denise Low-Weso further states: “the genre of ledger art and narration is ‘transmotion’: dynamic, culturally multidimensional, and visionary” (85). In historical and contemporary ledger drawings, as well as other indigenous narrative forms, there are rhetorically sovereign indigenous narratives written atop colonial pages. Today, ledger drawings from various nations are held in various spaces the world over, from private collections to museums and archives.

### **Archives, Museums, Conversations: Rhetorical Knowledge Spaces**

Archives and museums are notorious in their roles as colonizing bodies. This occurs for a variety of reasons that range from lack of consent secured from the Indigenous peoples represented in collections, to removal of items from Native cultures from which they arose and (re)contextualization of those items outside of indigenous influence, to the trope of the long-dead Native peoples. Often archives and museums alike perpetuate the “dead Indian” mythos, giving little to no acknowledgement of the actual lived experiences of contemporary Native peoples. Further, the archive and the museum are widely acknowledged by scholars as inherently tied to Western traditions and their imperial pursuit of knowledge (Driskill; Powell; Stoler; Tuhiwai Smith). The collection, classification, and containment of indigenous ‘artifacts’ creates an “othering” through which the museum and the archive articulate the centrality of Western knowledge (Cushman 116-119). Scholars in various fields, including those in American Indian and Indigenous Studies, Museum Studies, and Rhetoric and Composition, have engaged in the critical analysis of Euro-American knowledge-curating spaces by promoting and heralding the inclusion of Native peoples in developing and controlling their representation within museums and archives (Barker; King; Lonetree; Sleeper-Smith; West). In these spaces, the narratives of



Native peoples have been continually and violently situated within the narrative [display] of Western modernity (Mignolo), removing them from the contexts and experiences from which they originated.

Ledger drawings, by their nature as a narrative form, depict stories that actively engage and work against the display cases and exhibits within which they are held. The drawings embody that which is almost directly in contention with the considerations of Western modernity: pluralistic notions of authorship and contribution, the presence of transmotion and survivance in the images and narratives they tell (Low; Vizenor), and [re]mediating colonized genres to [re]center the knowledges and experiences of Native peoples. Through the work of historical and contemporary ledger artists, the archive and the museum are actively challenged in their methods of curation, and ultimately in their narration of a culturally specific knowledge. Particularly prevalent in this are the ways in which historical and contemporary ledger drawings and narrative pieces are rhetorically framed by the institutions and by the artists themselves. Then, the emphasis becomes two-fold: (1) the narrative as it is inscribed and embodied in the ledger drawings and (2) the narrative that is established by the discursive, spatial, and visual, etc. rhetorics that surround the narrative art. The relationship and dialogue between these two elements, and several other considerations, is integral to this project as it tracks the ways in which rhetorical knowledge spaces create, negotiate, and maintain conversations regarding indigenous cultures and communities in public memory.

These, then, are relationships between the three spaces exemplified in this project: the archive, the museum, and what I am calling *the conversation*. The conversation, as I consider it, spans across these spaces—across the archive, museum, and personal conversations with ledger artists—in a way that brings together various rhetorics in a way that is neither geographically nor

temporally-bound, but rather culturally-situated and largely influenced by narratives that carry across these spaces. Narratives weave between and through these spaces: across land and time, word and image, rhetoric and art, as well as indigenous and colonial histories. This weaving is not unlike material rhetorics wherein the process and practice of weaving—the action itself—is as important, if not more important, than the finished product (Brown and Strega 32; Chilisa 120). Like my story at the onset of this chapter, I intend to make connections across land and time, bringing these seemingly disparate places into conversation with one another. In much the same way, this dissertation is necessarily interdisciplinary in nature, bringing together Rhetoric and Composition with Indigenous Studies and Museum studies in a way that fosters decolonial thinking, weaving between these ways of perceiving and acknowledging the world. As I observe and interact with the work of historical and contemporary ledger artists, I see connections between the images on the pages of colonial genres and the theoretical work that is being done in academia across disciplines. Thinking of these connections between Native and Eurowestern epistemologies, and likewise, the influence of these epistemologies on the disciplines that inform this project, should not negate the violence that has been and is enacted upon indigenous peoples by colonial bodies in the past and today. I do not frame the relationships between these spaces as being *in spite of* violence, or inherently *connected to it*, as doing so only serves to center coloniality rather than indigeneity. Rather, I see these relationships as inexorably linked within and across these spaces, a topic I will discuss more fully in later chapters.

In this dissertation, I bring together conversations across spaces and temporalities—connecting rhetorical observations centering ledger drawings within the Kansas Historical Archive, the National Museum of the American Indian in New York City, and the “conversation,” a space in which the voices of artists are centered and expanded. Observation of

these spaces— through decolonial qualitative research—brings together the knowledge-work of Rhetoric and Composition, with my passionate interest in Indigenous Studies, and exciting work being done in Museum Studies. Bringing these disparate spaces into conversation with one another across different terrains, I complicate the influence and reach of Eurowestern institutional thinking and knowledge-curating in the construction of indigenous identity and narrative within, across, and outside of ‘institutional’ spaces through the critical examination of the ways in which ledger drawings are framed, engaged, and enacted across these spaces. By incorporating the voices of Native ledger artists, the conversation spans between the institutional and personal, creating a third space in which this research takes place. Ledger drawings, in particular, are unique in their positioning as a mediation of colonial and indigenous systems, and as a (re)claiming of indigenous meaning-making through the use of colonial genres.

## **Methodology and Methodological Considerations**

Throughout this dissertation, I attempt to understand ledger drawings within and outside of institutional spaces through several primary and secondary methods: 1) archival research at the Kansas Historical Society in Topeka, Kansas; 2) observations gathered at the National Museum of the American Indian in New York City’s *Unbound: Narrative Art of the Plains* exhibit; and 3) qualitative semi-structured interviews with three contemporary indigenous artists that engage the ledger art form. In order to enact these primary and secondary methods in ethical ways, an understanding of indigenous and decolonial methods and methodologies is necessary. What follows in this section is an overview of the methodological and theoretical influences of this study, placing indigenous and decolonial methods and methodologies into dialogue with one another. This leads to a discussion of the ethical tenets of indigenous research, with a particular

emphasis on relationality. This section then discusses my positionality as it relates to this research, including reflexivity and relational respect in indigenous research. Finally, this section sets up the specific research methods and structure of this project regarding each space/place.

Each component relates back to these two questions which guide my project:

*How do institutional discursive spaces—particularly the Kansas Historical Society Archives and the Smithsonian’s National Museum of the American Indian—narrate, negotiate, mediate, and/or mitigate the social action of ledger drawings in relation to the experiential landscapes, knowledges, and epistemologies to which they are connected?*

*How do contemporary indigenous artists/creators (re)envision the rhetoric of the archive and/or the exhibit as it frames the relationship between historical and contemporary ledger drawings and in what ways does this (re)envisioning en/disable artists/creators’ ability to interact with and affect their own personal and cultural narratives?*

A thorough understanding of indigenous research, specifically indigenous and decolonial considerations of qualitative methods, is necessary to solidly ground this work. Further framing of the methods specific to particular sections of this research project can be found in the chapters corresponding to specific locations. However, each chapter is grounded in a heuristic approach. Carole Blair emphasizes the material nature of rhetoric not only by what texts (and the diversity by which they are defined) mean, but also “what [they do]” and what actions they take/make (23). Though Blair’s work is framed initially toward memorial sites, I apply these questions to the material-rhetorical presences of the archive, museum, and the conversations with ledger artists. The heuristic includes the following questions:

1. What is the significance of the text’s material existence?
2. What are the apparatuses and degrees of durability displayed by the text?
3. What are the text’s modes or possibilities of reproduction or preservation?
4. What does the text do to (or with, or against) other texts?
5. How does the text act on people? (30-45)

Concerning heuristic research, Kū Kahakalau contends, “Only through continuous self-search, self-dialogue, and self-discovery, and an unwavering belief that knowledge grows out of direct human experience and can be discovered and explicated through self-inquiry, can an environment be created that allows the research question and the methodology to flow out of inner awareness, meaning and inspiration” (22). The chapters themselves are far more specific in their articulation of different methods as they are applied to these specific places, but a common strand between these chapters is their engagement with and their challenging of Blair’s heuristic for material rhetorics. To counterbalance the heuristic’s potential to limit lived experience, I am cautious in applying the questions directly to these spaces and materials throughout, taking these questions as *inspiration* for considering the various different ways that the materials may be approached and engaged. I directly participate in self-dialogue throughout the project, with occasional narrative interludes providing a space for movement between experience and theoretical knowledge. I likewise challenge and further develop Blair’s heuristic by providing alternative readings, decolonial discussion of the heuristic, and thereby offering insight into the transrhetoricity of the questions as they can be applied across spaces.

### *Methodological Underpinnings*

As scholars within institutional spaces, we draw upon traditions and processes designed to yield results and arriving at those results requires that a methodology of discovery be adopted. Shawn Wilson (Cree) notes this mentality of *discovery* itself is colored by colonization, with explorers credited with the “discovery” of America when the land was “discovered” many thousand years by indigenous peoples before the arrival of colonial explorers. The “discovery” of new lands or land features, such as rivers and mountains and even historic sites, explorers and

settlers claimed “discovery of that place and renamed them” (Chilisa 9). As Bagele Chilisa and Julia Preece note, this is a violent method of severing the connection between indigenous peoples and the land and a way of “dismissing the indigenous people’s knowledge as irrelevant” (9). Within this Western *discovery* mentality, often academic discourse does not acknowledge but rather, speaks for the peoples considered “outside” of Eurowestern knowledge systems. This is reflective of much larger trends and issues in the relationship between colonization and indigenous peoples. Along this same mentality of *discovery*, Western notions of research have resulted in the continual abuse, subjugation, and objectification of indigenous peoples.

Linda Tuhiwai Smith (Maori) argues, in *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, that research is another way to frame the argument of the “indigenous problem” and further, that “problematizing the indigenous is a Western obsession” (91). She continues, the “legacy of what has come to be taken for granted as a natural link between the term ‘indigenous’ (or its substitutes) and ‘problem’ is that many researchers, even those with the best of intentions, frame their research in ways that assume that the locus of a particular research problem lies with the indigenous individual or community rather than with other social or structural issues” (92). Eurowestern ideological understandings of research and research paradigms involve the framing of a research problem or a research question in order to find a solution or an answer that can be supported by collected information, analyzed observations, and thorough investigation of the subject. Historically and contemporarily, non-indigenous persons act on behalf of the colonizing Western research paradigm, seeking to answer the ‘indigenous problem’ through research on and about Native people while violently silencing indigenous voices, knowledges, and agencies (Bishop and Glynn; Cook-Lynn; Harvey; Smith). Or, as Duane Champagne points out, Western research paradigms are “positivistic, materialistic, reductionist,

objectivist, and focused on compartmentalizing knowledge into specialties” (58). Research itself has been, and always has the potential to be, colonial.

Indigenous and decolonial methodologies developed in response to the violence of colonial research paradigms (Bishop; Castellano; Wilson). These modes of inquiry negotiate difference in the seeking of knowledge. Indigenous methodologies, as defined by Linda Tuhiwai Smith, “approach[s] cultural protocols, values and behaviors as an integral part of methodology. They are ‘factors’ to be built in to research explicitly, to be thought about reflexively, to be declared openly as part of the research design, to be discussed as part of the final results of a study, and to be disseminated back to the people in culturally appropriate ways and in a language that can be understood” (15). Therefore, indigenous methodologies call for indigenous epistemologies, ontologies, axiology, and methods to be centered and emphasized in ethical, responsible, respectful, and reciprocal ways. Here, a clear delineation is made by Tuhiwai Smith: *indigenous methodology* is a theoretical landscape for inquiry. *Indigenous methods*, however, are “performative practices that represent and make indigenous life viable” (Denzin and Lincoln 22). There is a mixture of theory and practice within indigenous methodologies, wherein indigenous ways of knowing are a means of arriving at or coming to new understandings.

Indigenous methodologies are often discussed in conversation with decolonial methodologies. Decolonial methodologies, as Beth Blue Swadender and Kagendo Mutua argue, do not hold general universals that can be applied to all situations, but rather “decolonizing research methodologies” possess “activist agendas working toward social justice, sovereignty, self-determination, and emancipatory goals” (201). By performing decolonial work, it is necessary to acknowledge diverse ways of perceiving, knowing, communicating, and living.

Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln perhaps best relate the aims and goals of decolonial methodologies:

Critical, indigenous, decolonizing theory articulates an ontology based on historical realism, an epistemology that is transactional and a methodology that is performative, dialogic, and dialectical. It values ethical systems embedded in indigenous values. It transfers control to the indigenous community. It uses spiritual models of truth and validity and values multivoiced, performative forms of textuality (22).

Decolonial and indigenous methods (the two being not conflated, but related) then, are necessarily active and incorporate various perspectives, voices, modes, and ways of knowing while working against the intrusion of colonizing forces in inquiry (Botha 315). Tuhiwai Smith notes that qualitative methods are perhaps best positioned “to wage the battle of representation” and “to situate, place, and contextualize; to create spaces for decolonizing” (103). While qualitative methods can be perceived as colonizing by virtue of their origin in Western research paradigms, the relationship between qualitative and decolonizing, indigenous methods is a fair bit more complex.

Denzin and Lincoln argue that qualitative research “stress[es] the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry” (13). Yet, for all their decolonizing potential, it is essential to note the colonizing history of qualitative methods. While they are “best to create decolonizing spaces,” they also carry legacies of colonialism. As with all other research, qualitative methodologies have the potential to be silencing, assumption-based, violent frameworks by which indigenous peoples are disadvantaged. While some may argue for the eschewing of Western methodologies altogether, such as qualitative methods, from the inquiry of indigenous subjects (Kovach; Wilson), voices such as Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Shawn Wilson, Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln, and Margaret Kovach discuss the ways that qualitative



methods and Indigenous methodologies can create spaces for alliance rather than conflict. Margaret Kovach (Plains Cree and Saulteaux) argues that these spaces and the invocation of qualitative methods can be “triggering,” cuing negative memory and perception due to the “miserable history of Western research and Indigenous communities” (24). In her work, Kovach argues that qualitative research and indigenous methodologies share common ground in their emphasis on relation, situation, process, and content (25). Indigenous methodologies are *paradigmatic*—the specific centrality of tribal knowledge in epistemological understandings of approaches, interactions, relations, and methods places Indigenous methodologies both in relation to and yet completely outside of qualitative inquiry (Kovach 2010, 41; Wilson). As Kovach states in *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Context*, “Indigenous methodologies have a unique relationship with qualitative research, for they are both of it and not of it” (177).

Decolonizing methodologies and indigenous methodologies come into dialogue with one another. In a discussion of the relationship between decolonial work and Indigenous research, Margaret Kovach makes the following assertion:

[...] paradigmatically speaking, a decolonizing perspective and Indigenous epistemologies emerge from different paradigms. Decolonizing analysis is born of critical theory found within the transformative paradigm of western tradition (Mertens, Kovach cites). It centres the settler discourse, whereas an Indigenous paradigm centres Indigenous knowledges. While a decolonizing perspective remains necessary and can be included as a theoretical positioning within research, it is not the epistemological centre of an Indigenous methodological approach to research. An understanding of the nuances of an Indigenous paradigm is critical to moving forward with an Indigenous methodological approach (42).

Here, Kovach clearly outlines the relationship between the two paradigms as linked, yet not holding the same center of knowledge. How then, can qualitative decolonial work and

indigenous methodologies honor the space between them? The answer is perhaps best put by Shawn Wilson: *relationality*.

It is here that I shift my focus from reviewing the literature of these paradigms and methodologies to consideration of the qualitative methods used throughout this dissertation. This study—the inquiry into ledger drawings, the artists that bring them into being, and the spaces in which they exist—requires mindfulness<sup>3</sup> of representation and contextualization, centralizing various perspectives, knowledges, and ways of knowing within and across seemingly disparate spaces. Linda Tuhiwai Smith argues qualitative research is capable of best responding the “battle of representation [...] to situate, place, and contextualize; to create spaces for decolonizing [...] to create spaces for dialogue across difference; to analyse and make sense of complex shifting experiences, identities and realities” (103). This dissertation employs decolonial qualitative methodologies utilizing heuristic analysis with mindfulness of indigenous considerations, such as an emphasis on respect, reciprocity, responsibility and relationality. To approach this research with mindfulness, I use conversational method. Margaret Kovach defines conversational method in this way:

The conversational method is a means of gathering knowledge found within Indigenous research. The conversational method is of significance to Indigenous methodologies because it is a method of gathering knowledge based on oral story telling tradition congruent with an Indigenous paradigm. It involves dialogic participation that holds a deep purpose of sharing story as a means to assist others. It is relational at its core (40).

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<sup>3</sup> The use of the term “mindfulness” here is purposeful. Though I certainly acknowledge the work of Asao Inoue and Paula Mattieu regarding “mindfulness” as...., I instead perceive this mindfulness as decolonial practice. I approach mindfulness as methodology. In “Our Story Begins Here: Constellating Cultural Rhetorics,” Jennifer Fisch-Ferguson states: “The manner in which we engage, orient in relation to, or produce scholarship matters. We must be mindful that research methodologies are not value-free tools. Our practices, including our research methodologies, are imbued with ideological and epistemological beliefs and values that have material effects on the world.” Therefore, mindfulness in regards to this study seeks to accurately and respectfully articulate the representation and contextualization of indigenous narratives.

Conversational method can be seen in congruence with narrative inquiry or colonial conversational method, yet Kovach notes that conversational method when employed within an Indigenous context must possess certain characteristics: it must link to specific tribal epistemologies or knowledges, be purposeful in its aim, follow specific protocols depending on the knowledges or space around its performance, involve informality and flexibility, and it must be collaborative and reflexive. By placing these methods into conversation with each other, I also seek to incorporate my personal interactions with these conversations, experiences, drawings, spaces, and most importantly, people. My own transparency allows me to be relational in my work (Riley-Mukavetz).

### *I Come from Cherokee County, but I am not Cherokee*

One way I attempt to enact Ray Barnhardt's 4Rs of Indigenous research—respect, reciprocity, responsibility and relationship—is through clear articulation of reflexivity. That is, knowing, understanding, and valuing my positionality as a person, writer, and researcher. I am not a member of any Native nation or community. I say this not to caution the reader, but to give them my perspective on the things that I cannot know in approaching this research from my own positionality. I cannot know, or understand fully, tribal epistemologies and worldviews, the experiences of indigenous people, the full effect of colonial influences on peoples and communities, or the colonial history that has so impacted the present and future of indigenous communities. I cannot know any of these things as I have not experienced them. I write from my reality as a white female scholar and ally. What follows is a discussion of my positionality as a white woman as an initial gesture toward creating a relational understanding of this topic. This is not meant to decenter the indigenous voices and work within this dissertation, but to create an

ethical understanding. As Sundry Watanabe notes, “an ethical space is a theoretical space created among human communities for retreat, reflection, and dialogue to share understandings and to work together to create a shared future” (84).

Michele Moffat, in “Exploring Positionality in an Aboriginal Research Paradigm: A Unique Perspective,” explores herself as an “educated white woman” in relation to decolonial and indigenous research, clearing a space for the discussion of “a neutral, ethical space-bridging worldview” (763). While I do challenge the notion of neutrality (as all actions and texts are political and cultural in some way), Moffat outlines the process by which she contends with her positionality with respect to relationships, culture, epistemologies, ontology, and reality (764). Each aspect is influenced by colonialism and the violent history of colonial researcher inflicting harm and pain upon indigenous peoples. Moffat cites Kevin O’Connor, who details the “importance of thorough consideration for motivations regarding why a non-Aboriginal researcher wishes to engage in research partnerships in Indigenous communities” (765). It seems that there is a developing generation of scholars who wish to “move beyond the binaries found within Indigenous-settler relations to construct new, mutual forms of dialogue, research, theory and action” (Kovach 12). Considerations of self and motivation are essential to researchers outside of indigenous communities who hope to engage in decolonial work.

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*I grew up in Cherokee County, Georgia, the land of the Muskogee and Cherokee peoples. The county was created as “Cherokee County” to demark it as “Cherokee Indian territory,” which at the time of its lines being drawn on a map, was anything northwest of the Chattahoochee and Chestatee Rivers. Counties were cut out around Cherokee—Forsyth, Lumpkin, Cobb, Gilmer, Murray, Paulding, Bartow. All of it from the “Cherokee Land Lottery.”*

*We read about that growing up, as part of the Georgia Gold Rush section of our history lessons. My family home rests on land that was taken after New Echota, December 29, 1835. I've tried to figure out more about the land our home rests on.*

*Now people in my hometown say the county was "Named for the Cherokee Indians."*

*My high school bore the name "Etowah," after the river that runs nearby and the burial mound complex only a few minutes northwest. Cherokee High School, up in Canton, is one of the rival schools. They're the "Warriors." And the "Chiefs" are at Sequoyah High School, just down the road. Not many know who Sequoyah was. Most say he was a chief. Myself, I didn't understand until I was seventeen that he created the Cherokee syllabary.*

*Everyone knows about Etowah where I'm from. Mostly because every child in the metro-Atlanta area has been there for a field trip. We used to watch films before going there, with our packed lunches and milk so that we could eat at the park benches. We'd climb to the top of the paramount mound and look out over the fields. When I was that little, I can't remember if they said Native people lived on reservations.*

*What's that phrase that gets joked about? 'Everyone has a Cherokee great-something.' People say that where I'm from, like it's a joke. Stories get passed down. In my family, it's hard to track ancestry. My mother is adopted. One side of my family never had the means to keep track outside of Bibles and word of mouth. People said my great-great-grandmother was Cherokee. All I really know is that, somewhere in there, there's some Cherokee and German and Irish. They came down from South Carolina, at some point.*

*In the seventh grade, I tried to track my 'blood quantum' for a social studies project. I won first place at the fair. Found pictures of my ancestors. My mother helped me. I remember piecing it together, sitting in the floor of my living room. The people I remember speaking to,*

*they had never heard of blood quantum, but “everyone has a Cherokee grandmother.” Whatever I found, it didn’t count. The presentation was pasted on a black cardboard tri-fold. Some of my tape stuck to the back of an old, old picture. I still feel bad about that.*

*Growing up, the only exposure I had to Native people, outside of the narratives I was told by Disney and school, was my Uncle Rick. He and his wife, my Aunt Jo, live out in Arizona. Uncle Rick is Diné. When I was growing up, they would send me necklaces and presents. I remember a bear and an eagle necklace. I wore the bear necklace constantly until the clasp broke and it became too small for my neck. I still have them.*

*Uncle Rick taught me how to say salt (Áshijih) and pepper (azeedichii libahi), asked me if I was going to visit Haskell when I moved to Lawrence. Said that one of his nieces graduated from there. She works at the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Every time we talk on the phone, he asks me if I’ve gone to the pow wow at Haskell. He asks if I get up and dance. I always say no.*

*He says next time I go, I need to dance.*

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As a researcher, writer, scholar, and teacher, my worldview and knowledge is shaped by my experiences and background. My lived experiences play a role in how I perceive the process of researching, writing, creating, and knowing. This research requires that I be reflexive, exploring my perceptions and interactions as important in the process of inquiry. Reflexivity is defined by David Coghlan and Mary Brydon-Miller as critical to the creation of true relationships, requiring conversation with the self and with others as a means of understanding assumptions experiences and challenges in the creation and curation of knowledge, bringing in a frank discussion of identity within and outside of communities (560). Reflexivity is often discussed by non-indigenous persons working with indigenous communities as a means of

considering and confronting privilege, motivation, methodology, and relation. For example, Elizabeth Rix, Lesley Barclay, and Shawn Wilson discuss the perspective of a non-Indigenous clinician and researcher working with Aboriginal patients and the importance of self in research, the importance of interpersonal relations, and reflexivity within the health system itself. This complex and layered understanding of relationships within research is important to keep in mind. As Gretchen Rossman and Sharon Rallis note, this requires interrogation of the “complex interplay of [...] personal biography, power and status” (93).

My own identity as a non-indigenous researcher will be discussed throughout this dissertation, in narrative sections that focus on personal experience and reflection. These interwoven narratives are intended to bring forward my own experiences as I critically engage with my own worldviews, beliefs, and ontology. In this dissertation, I seek not only to understand the “rhetoric” of ledger drawings in relation to space, land, and memory, but also to engage the various relationships that are present in this research: between myself and the colonial influences that are present in my own epistemologies and ontologies, between my interaction with collaborators and the conversations held in various spaces, between myself and the research process as a Eurowestern construct, and between myself and the places discussed. To consider these components requires that I acknowledge my outsider status. Malea Powell states, “If we are to be allies, we must share some understanding of one another’s beliefs. We don’t have to believe one another’s beliefs, but we do have to acknowledge their importance, understand them as real, and respect/honor them in our dealings with one another” (2). To critically engage one’s own colonialism is a decolonial gesture, but a decolonial act is to seek to remedy and make changes to those colonial tendencies. Acknowledgement without action is empty. Throughout

this research, while remaining reflexive, I will to the best of my ability enact respect, reciprocity, responsibility and relationship— this is my first step in doing so.

### *In these Spaces (Collecting Observations)*

In this project, as has been described previously, I will consider three major spaces: the Kansas Historical Society Archive in Topeka, Kansas; the National Museum of the American Indian in New York City; and personal conversations with artists. The first and second of these spaces required on-site observation and interaction. Discussion of these spaces and their particular attributes, physicality and spatiality, and rhetorics is present in the chapter that corresponds to that location. Likewise, full discussion of the methods necessary for each space are discussed in connection with the chapter in which they are employed. Therefore, as described a bit further in just a moment, Chapter Two discusses the archive; Chapter Three considers the museum; and Chapter Four relates conversations with the artists. I chose each space for very specific reasons; the archive was chosen due to its locality and the exhibit was chosen for its temporality; and the artists were chosen due to their relation to the exhibit. With these reasons, the specific methods for engagement with each of these spaces varies as well, as I will discuss below.

The Kansas Historical Society Archive (KSHS), located in Topeka, Kansas, was chosen due to its proximity to the ledger drawings held within its archives and the proximity of the archive to the University of Kansas. The KSHS was ultimately chosen due to its locality. The archive is small and regional, bound to its nominal state, like many other institutions across the country. The ledger drawings held by the archive are from locations nearby, making the connections to locality and land-based memory more affecting. The drawings have been held by



the archive since the early twentieth century, with only one modern piece commissioned by the historical society by a local ledger artist. These various aspects make the archive in Topeka a crossroads of various histories as seen through a local, colonial lens.

To consider another rhetorical knowledge space, I chose the National Museum of the American Indian in New York City (NMAI-NY) due to its opening of the *Unbound: Narrative Art of the Plains* exhibit in March 2016. This opening was timely and spurred the inclusion of the museum as a space for consideration in this project. The museum, in contrast to the local archive, is a national or international space. The ledger art, and various other forms of multimedia narrative art in the ledger tradition, connects the past to the present through the inclusion of old and new examples in the exhibit space. Likewise, the exhibit incorporates interactive technology, phone applications, and a consideration of the materiality of narrative art. Further, the exhibit includes many examples of modern ledger art from various artists, commissioned for the exhibit's opening.

In March 2016, I visited the opening "Curator's Talk" for the *Unbound* exhibit. The exhibit curator, Emil Her Many Horses, and three contributing artists, spoke regarding the exhibit, the work featured there, and the perceptions they held regarding the history and presence of ledger art. The artists then answered questions and discussed their work while touring the newly-opened exhibit. It was the three present artists that I chose to speak to following the exhibit, to discuss their work and its exhibition in the museum. Chris Pappan, Dallin Maybee, and Lauren Good Day Giago agreed to speak to me regarding their ledger art, their perceptions of the form, and its exhibition at the museum. The conversations with these artists are considered as their own *space*, a concept I will argue further in Chapter Four.

## *Structure of this Study*

When this project was in its initial stages of development, I already decided that it would include the archival holdings of the KSHS archives and discussions with contemporary ledger artists. Upon the announcement of the *Unbound* exhibit's opening, this space was added to the project's scope as the third 'space' for engagement. The initial visit to the museum raised many questions, some of which grew from initial readings regarding the topic of material rhetorics and place-based memory. It was from consulting scholarship regarding place-based and material rhetorics that I found Carole Blair's heuristic for material rhetorics. This is where a slight split in focus must occur. First, I will discuss how the heuristic will be applied to the institutional spaces observed in this project. Then, I will explain how this same heuristic will be adapted to the conversations with ledger artists. While my project is conceived as employing a range of methods I should note that my continuous emphasis on relationality, as well as my use of Blair's heuristic, are two common threads that lend coherence to my study as I investigate the three spaces identified above.

Beginning with Chapter Two, the discussion of material rhetoric will be extensive and integrated into the critical interpretation of the KSHS archive space. This critical interpretation includes historiographic research and archival analysis that consider the material presence of ledger drawings within the archival space. Barbara Dickinson defines material rhetoric as “a mode of interpretation that takes as its object of study the significations of material things and corporeal entities—objects that signify, not [only] through language, but through their spatial organization, mobility, mass, utility, orality, and tactility” (297). Ledger drawings are material, yet they are more than that as well. This project looks to understand what ledger drawings *do* within these spaces and how that *doing* is mitigated or supported by the space around it. To

explore this kind of thinking, I have adopted Carole Blair's heuristic (a set of five generative questions) to observe the material rhetorics at play.

Chapter Three will observe the exhibit, *Unbound: Narrative Art of the Plains*, at NMAI New York. Discussing material and spatial rhetorics within a museum space, this chapter will incorporate rhetorical observation and analysis as well as discourse analysis. Once again, Carole Blair's material rhetorics heuristic will provide a touchstone for discussion, centering on the significance of material relationships within the exhibit space, as well as relationship to the building and land where the exhibit is situated. Likewise, this chapter will further frame the rhetorical knowledge space of the museum as a place of public memory. I argue that the archive and museum exhibit are connected, carrying on a conversation across distances and that this "conversation" affected by the various material present and the actions of those material within that particular space. In general, I begin to make observations about these connections and take a closer look at the way the museum frames the narratives of the ledger drawings, personal interactions within the exhibit, and how these material rhetorics interact with each other, highlighting indigenous rhetorics in action.

In order to include an expansive understanding of conversation that I suggest for this study, Chapter Four describes the conversations I had with artists featured in the *Unbound* exhibit. Considering these personal conversations, I make connections between theoretical perceptions of material rhetorics and the artist considerations of multimedia artistic production, especially as it aligns with the tradition of the ledger art form. This chapter provides the artists' own words in regards to the action of their work on audiences, how that work is shown, and the ways that exhibition components (such as frames and glass) affect the drawings. Though these conversations were not conducted at either the archive or the museum, rather by phone, the

interviews still bring into discussion the material and spatial, with questions asked during the conversation harkening back to Blair's heuristic. The specific methodological considerations of each space is included within the corresponding chapter. With conversations taking place over the phone, I relied heavily on listening methodology (Powell; Royster; Monberg), to consider not only the words that were said in these conversations, but also the nuances in structuring responses, their voices, and the examples that they provided.

In my concluding chapter, I place each of the previous chapters into dialogue with one another and the field of Rhetoric and Composition as a whole, yielding the major implications for this project. I argue that observing these spaces in conversation with one another and observing them as *transrhetorical* knowledge spaces may further our understanding of decolonizing institutional spaces. This chapter also synthesizes my findings from my dissertation, provides pedagogical implications, and sketches out future projects that may further the study of ledger drawings as embodiments of transrhetoricity.

## **Key Concepts, Terms, and Distinctions**

This section seeks to clarify the concepts, terms, and distinctions that inform this study and provide the groundwork for understanding the rhetorical presence of ledger drawings and how they are framed, defined, mitigated, and enacted across the archive, the museum, and in the conversational space. Given the three separate locations of this research and the distinctions in the theoretical underpinnings for those locations, within this section I will outline discussions that are necessary in understanding the general concepts of this dissertation. First, I provide a brief discussion and definition of place, space, memory, and time. Place and space, as well as notions of temporality, factor significantly into the exploration of connections across the archive,

museum, and the conversation as space. These terms are used often in the following chapters and therefore warrant discussion and definition prior to their use in later sections. This brief discussion then links to a discussion of post-/de-/para- colonial scholarship, grounding this project in the work of those that decenter colonial notions of knowledge. A general understanding of where this work is positioned within the broader spectrum of discussion helps to situate the chapters that follow within larger theoretical conversations. In order to frame this project in terms of Rhetoric and Composition, I then narrow the scope of post-/de-/para- colonial theory and offer a brief overview of decolonial rhetorics to situate my project within the larger conversation of diversifying Rhetoric and Composition scholarship.

### *Thinking Between: Place, Space, Memory, and Time*

Within the scope of this research, space and place are defined as related and necessarily interconnected. In the introduction to *Places of Public Memory: The Rhetoric of Museums and Memorials*, Greg Dickinson, Carole Blair, and Brian L. Ott define *space* as “that which allows movement,” or as “open, undifferentiated, [and] undesignated” (23). Space is perceived largely to be ideological, with broad definitions within time and location, in that either can be present or absent given particular understandings<sup>4</sup>. *Place* however is defined within space, or how it is “structured, bordered, and built” in “deploying” space (23). Within this, *place* can be understood as existing within and in relation to *space*. Dickinson, Blair, and Ott reference Leland Roth’s observation:

The ideas of ‘space’ and ‘place’ require each other for definition. From the security and stability of place we are aware of the openness, freedom and threat of space, and vice versa. Furthermore, if we think of space as that which allows

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<sup>4</sup> I offer here not an understanding of the philosophical underpinnings of such understandings, but the working definition that is used in this study.

movement, then place is pause; each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be transformed into place (23).

Dickinson, Blair, and Ott further this observation by making the following analogy: place is to space as memory is to time. Space can be argued as physical, while also contended as philosophical or political. Further, definitions of *space* shift and change according to the ideologies supporting that definition. Space, in this sense, is ambient and abstract. It is only when the place, space, and temporality are culturally-situated that its abstraction can be understood, and that *space* can be defined and given meaning. For instance, a “space for discussion” or a “space for collaboration” may not necessarily translate to a physical space, but rather a marked set of parameters for interaction. Rick Carpenter comments that “space is an abstract metaphor (although the spatial metaphors used to construct a particular space are frequently concrete) and imagined geography; a social construct formed through purposeful (inter)actions with/in the materially real by means of spatial practices” and these space therefore influence our ways of knowing, perceiving, and interacting with the world around us (208).

Likewise, in this project, a “knowledge-curating” or “knowledge-propagating” space establishes a set of shared traits across physical locations, even into digital environments. It is not necessarily geographical, while also not being entirely *metaphysical*. It is instead practice, a point I will discuss further in a moment. Places and memory exist alongside one another as “pauses” within space and time, or as “marked for recognition from amid an undifferentiated temporal succession of occurrences” (Blair, Dickinson, and Ott 24). *Public memory* therefore is a series of relationships born into present recognition within spaces or at physical places that frame

those relationships through rhetorical means, constructing perception of identity “*for particular audiences in particular situations*” (22, emphasis theirs)<sup>5</sup>.

Settler colonialism imposes definitions of space and place, as Sara Mills argues, colonial bodies established these definitions “on grounds and within systems of spatial and geographical signification established by indigenous people” (142). Colonial perceptions of temporality and time also predicated the organization and relationship of place and space, affecting perceptions of Dickinson, Blair, and Ott’s analogy. It is therefore important to consider the impact of culture on the definition of *place*, *space*, *memory*, and *time*. Space is therefore defined as shared, in both definition and practice—space is shared definition, space is shared practice. Gabriela Raquel Ríos argues that Western perceptions of space are “disconnected from ‘nature’ or the environment dematerialize[ing] space and presumes a dichotomy between humans and land/nature” (87). Ríos goes on to make the assertion that definition of space must therefore be decolonized, decentering the human from definition and instead centralizing Nature. Space, in indigenous perceptions, may have different connotations as linked to land, cosmologies and beliefs, relationship, and ceremony. Lisa Brooks, in *The Common Pot: The Recovery of Native Space in the Northeast*, conceptualizes space as a “common pot.” She writes that this “common pot” “is the wigwam that feeds the family, the village that feeds the community, the networks that sustain the village [...] Inherent in the concept of the common pot is the idea that whatever was given from the larger community of inhabitants had to be shared within the human community...sharing space meant sharing resources” (4-5). Space, most often, is argued as embodied. Nedra Reynolds, in *Geographies of Writing*, claims that “material conceptions of space begin with the assertion so familiar in cultural and postmodern theories that space is

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<sup>5</sup> Though not discussed at length in this chapter, public memory will be more fully discussed in Chapters Two and Three.

socially-constructed— and that identities are constructed as bodies move through the sociospatial world” (43). The rhetoric of and within these spaces structures the conversations with/in them, influencing the ways that knowledge is curated, articulated, and enacted. It is the work of post-/de-/para- colonial scholars to actively revise these definitions to reflect the diverse ways that place, space, memory, and time may be perceived and understood. I will discuss these concepts in the following section.

### *Some Necessary Distinctions: Post-, De- and Para- Colonial Work*

I feel it is important to make this assertion: the United States and its representative cultural institutions (e.g., the archive, the museum, the university, etc.) are the enduring result of past and ongoing settler colonialism. The Kansas Historical Society Archive, for example, discussed in-depth in Chapter Two, is located in Topeka, Kansas. A cold building of concrete and glass built atop land that was once inhabited by various nations over the seasons: the Arapaho, Cheyenne, Comanche, Kansa, Kiowa, Osage, Pawnee, Wichita, among others. Yet within its database, items pertaining to any indigenous nation are categorized with a revealing generality and sameness: *American Indian*. That no differences within this category are acknowledged is but one of many ways that colonialism is far from a past action, or an event that has been superseded in ‘modern times.’ Therefore, I perceive there to be no “post” when regarding coloniality— the dispossession, abuse, and violence continues today. This is why “decolonial” frameworks must continue the work of dismantling colonial structures of power that reside within Eurowestern bodies and institutions. Walter Mignolo notes that while postcoloniality and decoloniality are different approaches with different histories, they were “built on a common legacy: coloniality” (58). Decoloniality or decolonization (theory,



methodologies, and so on) blends together action and aim, defining coloniality and academic, cultural, and societal ways to dismantle, decentralize, and demystify colonial structures of power (Black; Kovach; Perez; Tuhiwai Smith; Wilson).

Even still, postcolonial and decolonial lenses can be restrictive in framing the relationships between colonial and indigenous bodies, signaling different mentalities toward research and scholarship. Gerald Vizenor describes the United States as “paracolonial,” though he provides little explanation as to what this can mean in practice. Malea Powell explores this idea further by asserting:

[...] because the processes of colonization have continued unremitted in Indian country for over 500 years, it is difficult to describe American Indians as either ‘postcolonial’ or ‘neocolonial’ peoples. The occupying force has not been, no will it ever be, withdrawn. So in understanding the relationship between colonizer and colonized in North America, it is essential to understand our situation in what Vizenor describes as ‘paracolonial’ terms, a colonialism beyond colonialism, multiple, contradictory, and with all the attendant complications of internal, neo- and post-colonialism (399).

While it seems that often these terms are conflated at times, what emerges from discussion of post-colonial, de-colonial, and para-colonial theories is a difference in relationships between indigenous bodies and colonial structures. While postcoloniality makes efforts not to place too much emphasis on the “post” of its name, postcolonial theorists often consider the ways Eurowestern structures and knowledges have engaged and silenced indigenous ways of knowing (Briggs and Sharp 661), especially in regionally-specific ways. As Powell et al. puts it, the post-colonial “is primarily concerned with stories told from the perspective of the colonized *about* the process of colonization (literature, travel writing, etc.)” (emphasis theirs). Paracolonial scholarship therefore is a bringing-together of Western and indigenous conversations that exist concurrently alongside one another—emphasizing the ongoing relationship, both to destructive and generative ends.

With these distinctions noted, this project positions itself within decolonial approaches to Indigenous scholarship, but with a friendly nod toward paracolonial scholarship as well. As a framework for inquiry, decolonial work is often scaffolded as action-based, or as Walter Mignolo describes “confronting and delinking from coloniality, or the colonial matrix of power” (xxvii). It is the active investigation, confrontation, and de-centering of colonial matrixes of power (Mignolo xviii). In some cases, theorists such as Emma Perez and Linda Tuhiwai Smith note that decolonizing actions can only be performed by the colonized. Perez, in her work regarding Chicana erasure and silencing, notes that decolonial demonstrations are necessarily political as a way of “reconceptualizing histories” (4). In order to do so, researchers must “retool, to shift meanings and read against the grain” (xvii). Nelson Maldonado-Torres best summarizes the goal of decolonial approaches:

The Decolonial Turn is about making visible the invisible and about analyzing the mechanisms that produce such invisibility or distorted visibility in light of a large stock of ideas that must necessarily include critical reflections of the ‘invisible’ people themselves. Indeed, one must recognize their intellectual production as thinking—not only as culture and ideology.

In this, one must recognize the plurality of experience and narrative as part-and-parcel of intellectual production—echoing Mignolo’s call for a paradigm shift “toward a future of dialogue toward pluri-verity, rather than monologue toward uni-versality.” Essentially, as Angela Haas notes, decolonial scholarship “redress[es] colonial influences on perceptions of people, literacy, language, culture, and community and the relationships therein and, support[s] the coexistence of cultures, languages, literacies, memories, histories, places, and spaces—and encourage[s] respectful and reciprocal dialogue between and across them” (55). Decolonial scholarship values, privileges, and makes way for dialogue—*conversation*—across spaces, times, and collective experiences.

Quite a bit of cultural rhetorics' theoretical influence arises from decolonial work. The Cultural Rhetorics Theory Lab defines "decolonial" as "stories from the perspective of colonized cultures and communities that are working to delink from mechanisms of colonialism" (1.3). In this, it is easy to see the impact of decolonial rhetorics scholars such as Walter D. Mignolo and Damian Baca, as well as scholars such as Linda Tuhiwai Smith and Shawn Wilson. Within this, the concept of making and practice are centralized. The materiality of rhetoric is drastically revised from its Western, and ultimately Aristotelian, origin and definition. Making, in the sense of meaning-making, community-making, and collective making, is a central tenet of cultural rhetorics. The importance of various meaning-making practices, across materialities, is valued and considered an embodiment of cultural practice. Making is considered cultural, from beadwork and performance to baskets and differences.

Cultural rhetorics scholars are very careful to point out that cultural rhetorics, as a specialty, does not perceive itself to be strictly for those studying "non-Western rhetorical practices"; rather they note that "it is an approach that recognizes and honors the cultural specificity of all rhetorical practices/productions" (Powell and Bratta). Yet, the argument could be made that all Rhetoric is already cultural and that it necessarily goes without saying that rhetoric is a culturally-bound and culturally-influenced communicative practice. The virtue of cultural rhetorics, however, is not its definition of rhetoric as cultural, but its triangulation of meaning-making within communities across fields, critiquing "how Rhetoric and Composition creates alternative rhetorics (coded as cultural) and canonized Rhetoric" (Riley-Mukavetz 42). Scholars of cultural rhetorics feel the need to make the distinction prominent due to the ongoing institutional centrality of 'the canon' as the center of all definitions of rhetoric and rhetorical practice. It is here that decolonization is key—the Eurowestern canon must be decentralized and

the possibilities of other ways of knowing are represented and enacted in methods, making, and meaning. Building connections across cultures, communities, and meaning-making systems is also a goal of scholarship regarding cultural rhetorics wherein the cultural specificity is respected, but alliances are built in the space between.

Transrhetoric allies particularly well with decolonial, indigenous, and cultural rhetorics as it emphasizes connection across spaces and places and across communities. Rachel Jackson, in *Red State Re-Claimed: The Transrhetorical Recovery of Resistance in Oklahoma*, defines transrhetorical awareness as “allow[ing] [people] to understand a place differently, in terms of multiple sites and voices, and enables them to see connections between people and places, issues and communities” (11, 5). This theory of transrhetoricity intends to create networks of shared practice and cross-cultural interactions as a means of building alliance. It may therefore be considered that transrhetorical approaches are one way of enacting cultural rhetorics, seeing and acting on opportunities for exploring rhetoric that spans across communities, cultures, and histories. Theories of these scholarly bodies will be present in the consideration of ledger drawings held within the archive, museum, and the conversation. Whether it is making a space for expanded discussion of indigenous ways of knowing or creating a space in which makers may tell their stories, scholarship and action take place through “thinking between,” and finding the constellations between one star and the next. Those connections, those *conversations*, are active in the production of meaning across cultures and communities. The conversation is decolonial.

## Conclusion: Conversations

Along a red wall in the *Unbound: Narrative Art of the Plains* exhibit, ledger drawings are situated in clusters along a straight line. Groups of three or four images are positioned alongside, diagonal, and above each other. While a visitor might initially expect to see dates and a timeline of creation, there are instead words: *horses, stories, flat, colors, buffalo*. Past and present are not relevant. Horses run from one image to the next, from then to now and from now to then. There is no sequence, just similarities: shared topics, shared colors. The medium varies— from ledger pages to deeds to muslin and graph paper. The timeline is not necessary. Within the trajectory that spans from one side of the wall to the other, the images are referenced, not along lines of linear chronology, but along a continuous web of relations. Christopher Green of *Brooklyn Rail* observes this lack of linearity: “[the exhibit] replaces the standard museological linearity of historical progress with a cyclical return, emphasizing the lived connection with tradition and the past that Plains narrative artists embody today.” The ways in which the ledger drawings, and other examples of the narrative art tradition, are exhibited within the museum are all integral to drawing the lines between the connections and conversations that the ledger art articulates. Across rhetorical spaces, the materials and narratives interact, relationships are articulated and enacted, and networks of meaning-making overlap. Both indigenous and colonial epistemologies are explored, both in terms of aggression and alliance. My project seeks to observe and understand these connections, to consider the way that these ledger drawings and the materials that surround them are in dialogue with each other, and further, how seeing these connections change the way we understand these spaces and the conceptualization of space. This discourse extends beyond the walls of the museum at battery of New York City to a small state archive in the central plains, where horses run across the pages of small notebooks and leaflet papers. It

also extends to the words of artists—from the southwest to the northeast to the central plains—as they describe their ways of making, what inspires that making, and how they see these connections between then and now. There are lines drawn from one space to another, from the archive to the museum to the artists. The lines themselves are spaces and denote spaces, the thinking between voices in an ongoing conversation.

I now draw a line to the Kansas Historical Society archives, and from there, I begin to understand the web of relations that encompass, define, and enact the Native ledger art tradition.

## CHAPTER TWO

### **Tracing the Lines Drawn: Ledger Drawings in the Kansas Historical Society Archives**

*There's a ledger drawing on the sign out front, the first image a visitor sees upon arriving at the Kansas Historical Society Museum and Archives. The image is of two men and three women talking, but on the sign it is cut in half, with the image extending off the sign and continuing in the archive itself. Another sign in the research room places a ledger drawing alongside a picture of two women and a house. It's decorative and promotional, thematic or tone-setting. It's a first impression.*

*The first notebook is set out for me. The lead archivist removes it from its manila folder and its white tissue paper wrapping, opening it to the first page. It is small, so much smaller than I had anticipated. It's set on the table nearest the reference desk, so that I can be watched while I work. Not having extensive experience handling such delicate documents, I ask if I need gloves to handle the paper. I am told I do not. "Just be gentle with the pages," I am told. "Don't push them down. Just be careful."*

*I sit down and my fingers gently take each page, flipping from one page to the next. Slowly, my fingers take on the grit, despite my intent to touch the notebook as little as possible. There's less distance there, but I am hesitant about that closeness.*

*With each passing image, I try to remember where the notebook came from, a history I will tell later in this chapter. I try to understand symbols I do not know. The significance of colors and animals and blankets, all things I have to research. Others have done much of that research already.*

*Yet, there are some images that I can understand. There are places where the artist changes his mind mid-drawing, stopping with one outline and creating something else on top of it. There are images of tipis and people standing near them, in the same blanket. I wonder if they were drawing home in those. There are splotches of paint and splatters of red on different pages, from improvised red watercolor that was too watery. Sometimes, it looks as if someone closed the book before the ink was set and dried.*

*There are fingerprints in the dried black watercolor—fingerprints on a bear and its cub.*

*There's also a conversation nearby, at the reference desk. One archivist tells the other, "Did I ever tell you that it turns out I have less Indian blood than I thought? Turns out my grandmother lied, or didn't know."*

*"No! Really?"*

*A few moments pass. "It'd be interesting to make ledger art. I'd like to do that. I could draw my dogs."*

*I look down at another drawing. This one's mounted on a cream-colored mat. It'd been on display at some point, they said. They kept it on the mat to keep it flat and safe. Its frayed corners are tucked into plastic tabs. I stare down at it, men and women and a tipi. I wonder if it's a ceremony or just a gathering of friends and family.*

*It occurs to me that my fingers tracing along the edge of the page might be a ceremony, but I'm not sure. I've read Shawn Wilson: research is ceremony. Despite having read, I only vaguely know what ceremony is, but the grit on my fingers seems like it might be.*

*I am interrupted by a voice that comes over my shoulder. "Are you looking at ledger art?" It's an older gentleman with a kind face. I explain that I'm doing research for my*



*dissertation. “It’s sad what happened—the story behind these drawings. Do you know what happened?”*

*I told him that I did, but only so much. He sits down and we talk.*

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## **Introduction and Background: The Archive as Intersection**

The Kansas Historical Society (KSHS) Archives sit next to an old boarding school on land that is ancestral to the Kaw, Kansa, Cheyenne, Comanche, Kiowa, Osage, Pawnee, and Wichita. The boarding school is visible from the front door of the archives, within walking distance. The site is positioned on a spur of the Oregon Trail, a thoroughfare of colonial pressure in the Western expansion. This placement is important. This relationship is important<sup>6</sup>. The archives sit at a nexus of coloniality, as an enunciation of colonial presence and power. As Malea Powell notes in her consideration of the Newberry Library and Archives, imperial buildings are “textual spaces designed to intimidate” and they “do so as a way to negate their own temporality and impermanence, and they accomplish that negation through *the practice of history*” (“Dreaming,” 121). In this way, the Kansas Historical Society positions itself, consciously or unconsciously, alongside and within the narrative of past and present colonial violence, placing the ‘impermanent’ within the ‘permanent.’ The boarding school building has been made into a warehouse for museum materials, a way station for history, with the story of the school being told in small snippets in the museum across the parking lot in front of it, but the stories live there.

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<sup>6</sup> The concept of relationality is one which deserves much more attention, and which many other scholars have theorized in ways I am grateful to acknowledge. For particular detailed descriptions of these theories regarding relationality, refer to Qwo-Li Driskill, Andrea Riley-Mukavetz, Malea Powell, Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Emma Perez, Shawn Wilson. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, relationality is a constant in this dissertation, though it is not always thematized as a separate discussion.

I drive by the faces of children in the upstairs windows and walk past them on my way to the archive.

This chapter considers the material rhetorics of the KSHS archives, particularly focusing on the materiality of the ledger drawings held by the archive, the archival space, and the materials that accompany or are adjacent to the ledgers within that space. First, I situate the archive as a construct, defining the archive within the colonial narrative. Understanding the nature of the archive, its coloniality, and the processes by which it is formed and curated is important to the overall consideration of the ledger drawings held by the KSHS. Utilizing the work of Denise Low-Weso and Ramon Powers, I then position the ledger drawings within their historical context and the tradition of ledger art as a narrative form born of colonial violence. In particular, I place this historiographic examination into contrast with analysis of the archival descriptions and categorical tags accompanying the ledger notebooks and drawings. Following the review of literature regarding archives and a brief outline of ledger art's historical context, I detail the methodological approach of this chapter and the means by which I engage with the materiality of the archive. Once my methodology is outlined, I discuss the material rhetoric of the drawings, placing them into direct conversation with the materiality of the surrounding texts, from the tissue paper the notebooks are wrapped in to the building's limestone construction. Bearing in mind these material relationships, I consider the continued material presence of the ledger art, its action within the archive, and the ways that these relationships are mitigated, articulated, and enacted within the archival space. As mentioned in Chapter One, I will conduct heuristic analysis through the use of Carole Blair's questions regarding material rhetorics. This heuristic will be provided later in this chapter. Bringing together Indigenous Rhetorics, qualitative archival research, historiography and heuristic analysis of material rhetorics, I move

to revise the way that we think about the relationships between texts, both colonial and indigenous, within institutional spaces— particularly within the archive.

The archive is an intersection of ongoing dialogue, even in what might be often considered a silent and silencing space. The archive lives, not only through the memories and histories that are collected within it, but in the way it is developed and grown. Sir Hilary Jenkinson, in one of the earliest known explanations of archival administrative work (1922), describes the archive as collected and arranged by a natural process, like an organism, “as a tree or an animal” (Nesmith 28). Yet that organism was, and is sometimes, regarded as independent of the contextual soil that surrounds it. Or, the branches that stem from it. Or the fact that there are many trees in the forest. (I could carry the metaphor further and argue that William Maher claims that the perception of archival work as apolitical or free of ideological underpinnings was particular to the time to the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.) Impartiality was so highly regarded that it was the first characteristic listed in Jenkinson’s *A Manual of Archives Administration*, a seminal work of the time that continues to hold bearing on scholarship today. This manual outlines that impartiality should be characteristic of the genres that surround archived objects and materials, *impartially* “reveal[ing] facts, acts, and the circumstances of their occurrence” (Duranti and Franks 223). This consideration of the archives as being neutral of all cultural and political influence has been and is contested, with many arguing that archives reflect society’s shifting perceptions of power, race, class, and gender, etc. (Foucault 1972, Derrida 1996, Cook and Schwartz 2002, Burton 2016, Kirsch and Rohan 2008, Rohan 2012). Archives are spaces in which the dynamic relationships within them are subject to and part of the knowledge terrains and temporalities that surround them.

Robert Connors describes the archive as “where storage meets dreams, and the result is history” (17). Neal Lerner points out that Connors does not specify whose dreams are being embodied in these spaces or whose history is being written. The great reality of archival work is the confrontation and mediation of material and textual relationships. Often, archives are perceived as a place for old things, for the preservation of the past and as a home for the custodial work of keeping that past (Pearce-Moses n.p.). There is a negotiation of tensions that takes place in archives, as memory is curated and chosen when archivists choose what to save, how to save it, and why. There are institutional pressures, audience considerations, construction or presence of records, and various other influences that are embodied in the archives that affect the archival project. Summarily, any definition of the “archive” is difficult to pinpoint with considerations given to the processes of archival work, the cultural presence and performance of archives, and the ways in which materials are curated, preserved, and enacted.

### *Defining the Archives and Decolonizing that Definition*

Defining the archives takes place within an ongoing and fraught conversation among various circles. Each disciplinary field seems to hold a different view of the archives, with varied perceptions of the actions that take place there, the knowledges that can be derived and imparted within and by them, and altogether conflicting definitions of archival practice. As a researcher triangulating among various fields, finding a definition and perception of the archives that functions between Rhetoric and Composition, Indigenous Studies, and Museum Studies was difficult. Historically, archives are complex structures derived from a Western mindset that demands the curation of memory, control over what is remembered, how it is remembered, and why it is remembered. It is therefore a common misconception that archives house anything and

everything that comes into their possession, from ephemera to official documents to cultural artifacts. Yet, as Carole Steedman states, in *Dust: The Archive and Cultural History*: “The Archive is not potentially made up of everything, as is human memory; and it is not the fathomless and timeless place in which nothing goes away that is unconscious. The Archive is made from selected and consciously chosen documentation from the past and also from the mad fragments that no one intended to preserve and just ended up there”(68). The archive, as Linda Tuhiwai-Smith notes, is sometimes regarded as a ‘storehouse’<sup>7</sup> of things, “of histories, artefacts, ideas, texts and/or images, which are classified, preserved, arranged and represented back to the West” (44). Archives are governed by practices, knowledges, classifications, and arrangements by which they are created and defined within physical or ideological boundaries.

It is here that I must delineate a split in the definition of “the archives.” There are two different perceptions of what archives are and what they do. Tom Nesmith describes “an archives” as “an ongoing mediation of understanding of records (and thus phenomena) or that aspect of record making which shapes this understanding through such functions as records appraisal, processing, and description, and the implementation of processes for making records accessible” (145). Here, there is a clear separation between the material ‘phenomena’ and the processes that surround, create, and mediate those materials. Archives are not merely physical storehouse spaces, but a complex web of associations, existences, and genres that are steeped in political and cultural contexts. Antoinette Burton calls this the “backstage of archives,” considering their construction, experiences, manipulations, and the ways they are controlled (7). Her discussion of archives, as well as Kirsch and Rohan’s *Beyond the Archives*, is at the

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<sup>7</sup> The Potawatomi Mission boarding school is now a storehouse for the Kansas Historical Society museum/archive.

backbone of this discussion and my personal interactions within the Kansas Historical Society archival space.

A common theme emerges between these two perceptions mentioned above as they both negotiate the various narratives of archives—the materials, the processes, and the methodologies through which archival research is done. Burton asserts that “archives are already stories: they produce speech and especially speech effects, of which history is but one” (20), and, like stories, archives “embed secrets and distortions,” with “selective disclosures, half-truths, and partial pasts” (20). Or, as Barbara Biesecker contends, the archive is a scene of “collective invention, of [...] collective invention of us and it” (124). In an unpublished dissertation, Madhu Narayan makes the contention that archives are more than stories, more than invention spaces, but rather that they are “culturally-situated arguments” that:

[...] emerge out of specific cultural and rhetorical exigencies: they gather contextual evidence that may be used to create arguments about specific communities. How archives are put together and sustained over time depends on a series of *culturally-situated practices*; these practices emerge out of a given community’s experiences in the world. [...] all archives are different: they enact, reproduce and authorize rhetorics that are always cultural (39).

Though Narayan makes a distinction between story and rhetoric in her dissertation, such a distinction in this case is not necessary. The stories are rhetorical. The rhetoric is a story. The value is transitive and mutually constitutive in a way that allows the archive to be both story and rhetoric. A culturally-influenced and situated space in which knowledge is kept, mediated, curated, and communicated. In this way, the archive eludes a concrete and fixed definition that speaks to all audiences.

Yet, this space of invention, story, and rhetoric, has been and continues to hold the potential of being a silencing space. The history and origin of archives arises from a violent colonial legacy, a tradition that focuses largely on the “imperialist agenda of preservation of

cultural tradition as hermetically sealed, contained, and unchanging” (Cushman 117). Archives steeped in coloniality establish the archives as collectors, as keepers of the “othered,” telling the stories of those remaining while failing to investigate the practices associated with that legacy and largely ignoring the work of indigenous peoples in resisting these oppressive movements (Cushman 118). In doing so, Ann Stoler contends, those engaging the archives must not only address the content of the archive, but also its process and epistemologies. Stoler argues that it is imperative that colonial archives be perceived as “transparencies on which power relations were inscribed and intricate technologies of rule in themselves” (87). The enunciation of Western power and knowledge was and is the project of the archive (Cushman 2013, Driskill 2010, Powell 2010, Stoler 2002). Or, as William T. Hagan argues, “to be an Indian is to have non-Indians control your documents from which other non-Indians write their versions of your history,” describing Native Americans as “archival captive[s]” (135). In more recent years, this same sentiment was echoed by Qwo-Li Driskill: “The archival project was not created *for* Indians. It was created to consolidate knowledge *about* Indians.” Defining the archives without acknowledging the colonial influence of that definition would serve to only continue the narrative of oppression.

In response to the acknowledgement of colonial influences on archival memory, there have been ongoing discussions regarding the decolonization of archival space, both in physical and digital dimensions. In some cases, this decolonization takes the form of tribally-controlled archives (Roy and Alonzo). In other cases, it is the reclamation of indigenous power and meaning-making within state and national archival spaces. Crystal Fraser and Zoe Todd consider this in their treatise on the decolonization of Canadian archives and archival research, citing that archives must meet the needs of Indigenous peoples through more than simply the digitization of

content, but in blunt conversations regarding access, accountability, and the bureaucracies that surround archives. Perhaps most importantly, they reiterate that “the structure and function of archives remain bound to National imaginaries and histories.” In the direct interrogation and confrontation of colonial archives, and the subsequent changes stemming from that dialogue, archives continue to hold fast to their original intent: “to create national narratives that seek to legitimise the nation state by excluding Indigenous voices, bodies, economies, histories, and socio-political structures” (Fraser and Todd). In fact, the Kansas Historical Society mission statement speaks directly to this aim and tension. This document states:

The Kansas Historical Society is the state agency charged with actively safeguarding and sharing the state’s history to facilitate government accountability, economic development, and the education of Kansans. This is accomplished through collecting, preserving, and interpreting materials and information pertaining to state government and Kansas history.

Its mission centers the state and state identity in the collection, preservation and interpretation of materials “pertaining to the state government and Kansas history.” With the state identity and state government centralized in this mission statement, Native voices, histories, bodies, and knowledges become excluded and wherever they are included, it is for the sake of the state.

### *On (Decolonial) Archives, Identity, and Rhetoric*

Jennifer O’Neal problematizes current policies regarding the collection and preservation of Native American items held within state and national archives, nodding toward activist movements charging for the “proper care and management of Native American archive collections at non-Native repositories” (3). O’Neal’s argument centers on the development of tribal archives and the establishment of procedures and practices for the responsible handling of Native archives. In making this argument, O’Neal draws attention to Vine Deloria Jr.’s (Standing



Rock Sioux) “The Right to Know,” a treatise produced in 1978 regarding possible solutions for the ongoing problem of irresponsible keeping of indigenous archives, cultural items, and tribal knowledges, held by state and national (as well as personal) public archives. In the nearly forty years since the report’s 1978 publication, tribal archives have arisen as secure places for the protection and access of tribal histories and traditions, yet state and national archives continue to perpetuate colonial pressures upon the Native American items kept in their collections and upon the indigenous peoples seeking to access or repatriate them. This sort of collection-violence is not unfamiliar. Collections in various national and state archives were developed through the work of anthropologists, ethnographers, historians and amateur collectors in the latter half of the nineteenth century, with the mindset of preserving a “disappearing people” (Brown; O’Neal). The state production of documents regarding Native nations likewise furthered the archival presence of indigenous peoples, with records often kept without tribal permissions, along with most artifacts and items of cultural import.

Discussions regarding the holding of indigenous art, cultural items, and traditional knowledges have been ongoing since the 1970s. Along with Deloria, O’Neal cites William T. Hagan’s 1978 situating of Native Americans as “archival captives,” in that most documents held within state and national archives are records produced almost entirely by white men and that those white men often mistook what they observed, leading to researchers and archivists later misinterpreting context and meaning for tribal nations. Yet, O’Neal points out, the major issue in Hagan’s contention is that the validation and revision of Native American archives “is in the hands of non-Indian historians and ethno-historians.” Hagan argues that it is only through cooperation and understanding between non-Native and Native parties that fair access, productive change, and revision of colonial power dynamics seen within the archive can change.

This and Deloria's call to action are both echoed in more contemporary scholarship regarding the presence and revision of Native American collections within archival spaces. With the passage of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA)<sup>8</sup> in 1990, the 1990 Indian Arts and Crafts Act, and the 1997 United Nations *Protection of Indigenous People* report (also called the "Daes Report") conversations regarding indigenous intellectual property, access, and the training of archivists in the engagement of Native American materials has been ongoing.

Since the passage of NAGPRA, engagement regarding the respectful and responsible keeping of Native American items of cultural importance has been developed further throughout the past twenty-five years. Even so, O'Neal argues, "[these] law[s] did not provide guidance or regulations regarding the care and preservation of Native American archival collections at non-native repositories, including both tangible and intangible items." Likewise, in *Who Owns Native Culture?*, Michael T. Brown argues that these laws and acts are "more of a grab-bag of laws, resolutions, and legal precedents than a closely reasoned policy statement" (211). In fact, Brown points out many issues with these regulatory documents, citing issues with the flattening of indigenous cultures to singular definitions, the lack of acknowledgement of what effects these procedures and regulations might have on indigenous peoples, and likewise, the continuation without change of procedures and regulations that work against indigenous cultural considerations (217-218). Brown thus argues that changes must be made by "civil society," a bringing together of Native and non-native persons to make changes that benefit the indigenous peoples represented in archives around the world. In her review of Brown's book, Angela Haas levels a critique of Brown's assertions regarding "civil society" and the lack of contextual

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<sup>8</sup> Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, 25 U.S.C., §§3001-3013, (2006). See also Jack F. Trope and Walter R. Echo-Hawk, "The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act: Background and Legislation," in *Repatriation Reader: Who Owns American Indian Remains?* ed. Devon A. Mihesuah, University of Nebraska Press, 2000, 123-168.

framing that is done regarding colonial influences upon that civil society, the ongoing violence of colonialism, and how that likewise influences the ways in which repositories are created, revised, and contested (240). The impact of decolonizing or indigenizing work, such as NAGPRA and other regulatory documents like it, is profound though little evidence of such revisions in archival process can be seen in the Kansas Historical Society Archives.

In response to calls for action, all the way back to Deloria and Hagan, a movement began in the late 1990s and early 2000s to create a set of practices to guide archivists in their engagement with Native American materials. In 2006, the *Protocols for Native American Archival Materials* was established by Karen Underhill and a group of 19 information specialists as a way to “encourage non-Native American collecting institutions small and large to engage in consultation with relevant Native American communities and pueblos on [their] collections” (Underhill 441). The *Protocols* document sets forth best practices in the collection, curation, access, and use of Native American materials, further providing specific guidelines for repatriation and culturally responsive care within non-native archives through collaboration and reciprocal relationships (O’Neal). This step in defining best practices for interactions of indigenous makings, cultural traditions, and knowledges has been met with staunch criticism and theoretical support. Some argue that it “challenges the ‘bedrock’ of American archival practice,” while others contend that the *Protocols* actually function within the modern parameters of archival work, “through the theoretical concepts of the post-custodial model for participatory and community archives, with a deep foundation in the model for social justice archiving” (O’Neal 14). This view requires that the archive be understood as not merely a *storehouse*, but rather as a space for action, conversation, which might provide a nod toward the vision of the KSHS Archives: *To enrich people’s lives by connecting them to the past*. Ultimately, O’Neal argues that

though work of the past twenty-five years has been invaluable, there is still significant work to be done in the care and management of Native American archives at non-tribal spaces. This work, she contends, “rests upon the collaboration and development of [policies, training, and support] between all parties, both Native and non-Native” (17). The work of decolonizing the archive is ongoing.

## **Materiality and the Violent History of Narrative Art**

*I did not encounter any issues in accessing the ledger books. I am told to show my photo ID and register at the front reference desk. I receive a research card in return. Idly, I think about whether or not they allow tribal IDs. I’ve heard that other archives don’t allow them, from a friend who had encountered that issue before.*

*I set my bags in one of the lockers. There are no bags allowed in the research room. Just paper and pencils. I carry in my dissertation notebook, with all my notes, questions, and methods scribbled into the pages. The notebooks and drawings are prepared before I arrive, sitting in a small box behind the archivist reference desk at the side of the room. They’re held in separate cream-colored folders. I am told that I can handle them with my bare hands, so long as I stay by the desk to be observed.*

*“So you don’t steal anything,” I am told jokingly by one of the chipper archivists. I wonder if there might be a precedent for that, but I do not ask.*

*As I look around the space, I see a banner hanging from the rafters, the picture of two Cheyenne women, an earth lodge, and a ledger drawing—men and women courting. It reminds me of the sign out at the entrance to the complex.*

*I set aside my pencil and notebook, carefully thumb through the pages.*

## *Narratives and Counternarratives: The Dodge City Ledgers*

In September 1878, between 300 and 350 (depending on the source) Northern Cheyenne of all genders and ages, left what was called “Indian Country,”<sup>9</sup> now northern Oklahoma, to escape miserable living conditions and disease. Eventually, this exodus group split into two as they trekked northward across western Kansas. One group was led by Little Wolf and the other by Dull Knife (or Morning Star), two chiefs who were attempting to lead their people to their former homeland further north. While the Little Wolf party was able to avoid the United States Army, the Dull Knife group (comprised of about 149 individuals) encountered cavalry in the middle of a terrible winter storm. They were then imprisoned at Camp (Fort) Robinson in Nebraska throughout the winter months where they refused to be forced back down to Oklahoma. The conditions that winter were harsh and they were given no food, water, or heat to sustain them as they were locked in the barracks of the fort. The situation grew more and more desperate, with individuals being separated from families for long durations of time. Eventually, escape became the only option. After an attempted escape on January 9, 1879, only fifteen men remained alive (Powell 272-274). Some were able to make it to safety further north, others, like Dull Knife, were able to make it to Pine Ridge to seek shelter. Some were recaptured and sent back to Indian Territory. This has been called the “Fort Robinson Massacre”<sup>10</sup>. For the past

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<sup>9</sup> The term “Indian Country” is difficult to define. The term was codified by the United States Congress in order to establish jurisdiction. “Indian Territory,” or “Indian Country,” referred not only to reservations, but also to trust lands and those lands under the sovereignty of tribal governments. Of course, the term is fraught. “Indian Country” as a term imposed by a colonial body, while on the one hand acknowledging sovereignty in some senses, also collapsing indigenous identity to singular and monolithic. Yet, at the same time, “Indian Country” is a “real place.” As Lisa Watt argues in *American Indian Nations: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow*, the term is representative of cultural, historical, and societal presence and “claims to original ownership and autonomy” (73). Therefore, the history of the term is complicated, yet very much active in conversations regarding indigenous sovereignty today.

<sup>10</sup> Sponsored by the *National Endowment for the Humanities*, Denise Low-Weso completed a thorough exploration of the historical context surrounding the creation of the ledgers notebooks and drawings from Dodge City. This project draws much of its historical context from Low’s work. Low and Ramon Powers, former executive director of the Kansas State Historical Society, published a piece titled “Northern Cheyenne Warrior Ledger Art: Captivity

twenty years, runners honor their ancestors' escape and legacy by participating in a 400-mile run that traverses four states, starting at Fort Robinson and ending in Montana.

The flight of the Northern Cheyenne from the inhospitable lands of their confinement came at a time of intense aggression from the U.S. Army. These events trailed the Battle of the Greasy Grass (otherwise known as the Battle of Little Bighorn) by only a few years. The exodus became plains lore, legends diverting heavily from the truth, riled by the sensationalist rhetoric of the time. Newspapers across the country picked up the story, with varying degrees of veracity and sympathy. Of the surviving men who were either recaptured or escaped to Red Cloud (what is now Pine Ridge), seven were ultimately arrested and taken to Kansas to face trial for the murder of those killed during the Cheyenne exodus to northern territories. Denise Low-Weso compiles media reactions to the Cheyenne prisoners, from the mildly sympathetic—the *Saint Louis Post and Dispatch* reported, “If they had been wild beasts doomed to extermination their treatment could not have been more cruel and merciless”—to the outright hateful *Dodge City Times*, “the best Indian, is a dead Indian.” The historical context is essential to understanding the drawings held in the archive. Low and Powers note that the imprisonment of these seven men became emblematic, a sort of symbolic action representing the relations between Euro-Americans and the Northern Cheyenne. They state:

These two peoples [...] came into conflict and that conflict played itself out, in part, through the captivity of the seven Northern Cheyennes being held for trial in the Ford County Jail in Dodge City in 1879. The prisoners' experiences evolved through five months, with ledger drawings serving as their only direct form of expression. Interviews they gave to newspapers created a public image, but one that was beyond their editorial control. The press gave contradictory opinions, but it never ignored the group, and the impending trial incited public interest. All the while it was through their ledger art that the Cheyenne prisoners recorded their perspective on what was happening to them and their people (7).

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Narratives of Northern Cheyenne Prisoners in 1879 Dodge City” in *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains*. Further information on the historical context of these drawings may be found in this article.

Through the images drawn on notebook paper, the Cheyenne men mediated their identities, inscribing their pain, their memories into tradition. By illustrating ceremonies, relationships, animals, home, and family in the tradition of Northern Cheyenne pictographic and representative style, they were able to reclaim agency, protecting themselves through the stories that they told. They continued the heraldic tradition of “warrior art,”<sup>11</sup> a way of both negotiating their own trauma and influencing public perceptions of their nature and intentions. The drawings acted as both healing talismans, protective actions, and as a rhetorical weapon in the face of colonial pressure.

Following the acquittal of the Northern Cheyenne men, they were subsequently released and allowed to return to their northern homelands (Low; Low and Powers). Upon their departure, willing or otherwise, these drawings were left to the people of Dodge City. These notebooks and singular drawings are described and explored by Denise Low-Weso and Ramon Powers in their article, “Northern Cheyenne Warrior Ledger Art: Captivity Narratives of Northern Cheyenne Prisoners in 1879 Dodge City.” Each notebook is described in terms of provenance, historical contextualization, and content. The detailing of provenance is certainly important in the discussion of archival documents while the historiography of the ledger notebooks and drawings goes further than merely framing the ledger art in terms of the so-called “Indian Wars,” a topic that will be discussed later in this chapter. The content of the ledger notebooks is described at length, from the inclusion of animals and courting to the lack of warrior narratives and battle

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<sup>11</sup> Within the tradition of Plains narrative art, *warrior art* is grounded in the motif representation of warrior culture. Images representing cosmologies, visions, battles, status, honor, and medicine were etched into rocks, hides, shirts, shields, and various other materials. Often, the images cued specific stories and narratives, codes of ethics, records of counting coup, and acted as biographic and autobiographic record for warrior societies (Keyser and Klessen). For the most part, *warrior art* was considered a male form of expression. Following the spread of paper, *warrior art* was inscribed in notebooks and ledgers.

stories, a likely rhetorical move that demonstrated an audience-savvy inscriber.<sup>12</sup> As a way to create their own personas separate from the media-influenced sensationalism, and to pass the time in their jail cell, the Northern Cheyenne men used small notebooks, a few colors (yellow, red, blue, and black), to mediate and materialize their struggle and culture—establishing a living narrative that carries into the research room of the Kansas Historical Society archive today.

### *Overlap of Materiality, Method, and Knowledge-Making*

Considering the material rhetoric of the archive is a difficult task, one that finds itself challenging the presuppositions of archival work and history-making as it is currently understood by a vast majority of the Archival Studies, Rhetoric and Composition, and History fields. Materiality requires the consideration of lived experience, as multidimensional ways to construct and understand the archives through critical engagement of personal location in relation to the objects and the spaces in which those object are engaged. Jacqueline Jones Royster and Gesa Kirsch argue that this engagement of materiality has the ability to resist imperialist traditions through interaction with personal identity and further, that “strategic contemplation” of the archives “has the capacity to keep components of identity (race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, disability, etc.) within scope.” (89). This strategic contemplation happens as a researcher “engages the materiality of archival work—visiting places, handling artifacts,

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<sup>12</sup> Though the specific historical audience of the Northern Cheyenne ledgers is not the emphasis of this project, it is important to note that there is a distinct difference in these ledgers than many other ledgers contemporary to their inscription. As Denise Low-Weso notes in her observations, “[they] censored their feelings publicly and in their ledger drawings. No representation of hostilities against the U.S. Army or settlers appears in the drawings. This self-censorship of war scenes may indicate the Northern Cheyennes’ awareness of the use of ledger art images by the army to vindicate its reprisals against Indians [...] Ledger art war scenes would have jeopardized [their] legal case” (4). Though certainly the audience of today is quite different from the intended or unintended audience of the ledger’s inscription, the artist nevertheless drew with a specific audience in mind and a particular awareness of the peripheral audiences that may eventually have access to the drawings.



following unexpected leads, standing in silence, and allowing for chance discoveries and serendipity” (89). I engaged in this work—visiting the KSHS archive, handling the ledger notebooks and drawings, following strands of history, sitting with the grit of the paper on my fingertips.

My methodological approach, as mentioned in Chapter One, varies according to the location of the research in order to create a nuanced understanding of the rhetorics active within that space. In this particular chapter, the methodology is a mixture of archival observation and analysis, historiography, and rhetorical analysis which is then analyzed through consideration of Carole Blair’s heuristic for material rhetorics. Archival observation of the Kansas Historical Society archives includes not only data concerning the archive’s ledger art holdings, but also the categorical materials that exist alongside the drawings. Notes were written regarding the notebooks’ material presence as well as the cataloguing information that accompanied the drawings. These notes were then cross-referenced with the online Kansas Memory database to verify all cataloguing information, including item descriptions, tags, and categories. The drawings and the accompanying cataloguing information required historiographic positioning, an understanding of the ledger drawings as they were positioned in history outside of colonial praxis. From the outset of this project, the goal was not necessarily the compiling of empirical data, but critical consideration of the interactions within the archival space. In this, I performed a rhetorical analysis of the collected observations, particularly focusing on the material-rhetorical relationships and functions within the archive.

To examine the rhetorical presence of the ledger art and its relationship with the material and spatial rhetorics that surround it in the archive, I rely on a mixture of methods—not focusing entirely on either the ledger drawings or the archive, but rather a conversation between the two.

The experience and observation of the Kansas Historical Society archive will be framed through Carole Blair's five heuristic questions as avenues for exploring the material experience of the ledger drawings in the archive. Blair emphasizes the material nature of rhetoric not only by what texts (and the diversity by which they are defined) mean, but also "what [they] it [do] does" (23). Blair's heuristic is framed toward memorial sites in her work, but is (re)situated within the archive here. Blair's questions require that I consider the archive as *material rhetoric* in that archives "signify not [only] through their spatial organization, mobility, mass, utility, orality, and tactility" (Dickson 297). Archives are assemblages<sup>13</sup> of rhetoric and rhetorical presence through their construction of space, the mediation of narratives and materials held within that space, and through the symbolic action of those mediations.

As a space, the archive is bound to public memory and thereby exerts power in the construction of knowledge and identity, articulating histories through the rhetorics it puts forward, preserves, and services. In that construction and constitution of public memory, its partiality and the rhetorics by which that partiality is implied and articulated is contested by other memories (Blair, Dickinson, and Ott 9). Implicit in this analysis is the interrogation of power and coloniality. As John Bodnar states, "Public memory speaks primarily about the structure of power in society because that power is always in question in a world of polarities and contradictions and because cultural understanding is always grounded in the material structure of the society itself" (15). Public memory and rhetorical knowledge spaces— particularly

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<sup>13</sup> The use of "assemblage" to the popular notion of archives as hybrid or mixed collections of documents, items, materials, and various other modes or presences. Likewise, I particularly draw on Niamh Moore et al's conceptualization of the archive as an "assemblage of faded presences and shadowy absences, a spatiotemporal matrix where the past is penetrated by and also part of the present" (157). The popular notions of assemblage, such as Johnson-Eiola and Selber, in *Rhetoric and Composition* may not be entirely disassociated. Assemblages, whether in the composition of an archive or the composition of a text, is social and cultural in construction.

knowledge-curating and knowledge-propagating spaces— articulate relationships, and it is these relationships that I seek to understand.

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*“It’s a sad story, isn’t it? Do you know the story?” I tell him that I do as he sits down in a chair across from me. The older man—he introduces himself as Ramon Powers— leans back and gestures toward the double-sided drawing that lays on the table in front of me. “Those were drawn by the Northern Cheyenne prisoners. They tried to escape Oklahoma, Indian Territory, and ran north through western Kansas to make it back to their homelands. Then, Fort Robinson happened, and they were put on trial for murder down in Dodge City.” I nodded, listening as he explained. “They were ultimately acquitted, but they went through such terrible—really bad—things while they were held there.”*

*“I remember reading your article. When I was going through the notebooks, I noticed it—The fact that they censored themselves, drawing animals and courtship, but no battles.”*

*“They were on trial for murder,” he returns with a nod. “The charges were dismissed. Did you see the sign out front?”*

*I saw “Kansas Historical Society” with a ledger drawing from one of the notebooks showing men and women in courtship or a dance—and slammed on my breaks in surprise. “I saw it. I stopped to get a picture. It surprised me.” I watch as he nods and smiles. I point up at a banner hanging from the rafters of the research room. “And then, the one up there.”*

*“I saw a movie with these drawings on the side of a tent. I can’t remember what movie, but I doubt they got permission to use the drawings. But there is a movie out there that uses them. I’ll send you the clip if I can find it. I saw that and recognized them immediately. They*

*used the owls. Do you know the ones I'm talking about? I saw that and I thought: there's no way you had permission to use those."*

*I remember those owls. I remember that there are fingerprints in the ink.*

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## **Knowing What Happened and Why that Matters**

Indians History Coll. #590 Box 2, Folders 22 and 23. Archival organization, categorization, and description are the means by which the archive and the individuals within it seek to “make sense” of the collections it holds. As Michel Foucault argues, archives are “the general system of the formation and transformation of statements” (130). The ways in which archives organize, categorize, and describe their contents are rhetorical maneuvers, discourse that takes the form of multiple genres and materials in the articulation of particular narratives. Ledger drawings held at the Kansas Historical Society Archives (KSHS) are consistently mediated by a network of archival genres and conventions—by the boxes and physical locations of the drawings, the categories prescribed to them, the descriptions that accompany them. Each is located within the material rhetoric of the archive space, within the research room at the KSHS, on what was once sovereign land. There are layers upon layers of experience and discourse. The consideration of archives as subject and object of rhetorical study is far from new (Ferreira-Buckley; Morris III and Rawson; Morris; Selzer and Crowley; Kirch and Rohan). However, I offer a consideration of the developing view of the archives and the work of archives as material rhetoric<sup>14</sup>. It is through the work of organization, categorization, and description that the

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<sup>14</sup> Here I must acknowledge Courtney Rivard's work in the development my understanding of the archive as material.

“authoring” of the archive is manifested, in which the creators and curators of a history create a visible discourse. In this, the archival record, as Tom Nesmith contends, is “a meaningful communication, which means it is a physical object, plus an understanding or representation of that object” (32). To observe and interrogate the way this communication takes place, the way histories and public memory are enacted, and the ways in which the material experiences are mediated, I consider the presence and ramifications of coloniality in the archive through discourse and historiographic analysis.

### *Colonial Categories of Land, Space, and Time – Immigration and Settlement*

As a rhetorician, I am particularly sensitive to the idea of categorization as a means of delineating knowledges and ways of perceiving the world. Certainly, I understand and can heartily enact the categorization of genres, or the use of categorization to organize thoughts, patterns, and behaviors. Yet, I must always consider categorizations to be rhetorical acts. Such a consideration is not new. In “Accessing Transgender // Desiring Queer(er?) Archival Logics,” K.J. Lawson considers the subject headings of the Library of Congress concerning the application of tags and headings with gender topics ultimately not associated with the term ‘transgender,’ leading to an interrogation of the shifting language that must happen between a text and the genres and records that surround and represent it. Similarly, Laura Stoler critiques the classification systems by which ethnicities are categorized thereby “constructing” their presence and “validating” their experiences. Francis Blouin and William Rosenburg state, this then “serves to create and authenticate the entity being catalogued through the very significance of the archival institution itself and the presumptive attributes of its cataloguing and classificatory systems” (254). Ultimately, the labelling of any material is not only

organizational— a means of placing knowledges and productions into (relatively) easily accessible search-term boxes—but also political. The terms (categories, search terms, keywords) assigned to objects and texts not only creates and communicates relationship, it also establishes legitimacy within the archival structure itself. Within colonial archives, this is particularly so when marginalized discourses are situated on a praxis of colonial epistemologies, history, culture, knowledge, perceptions of land, space, and time. This observation, of course, is not to blame the archivists whose work is fraught in many instances by time constraints, funding disparities, and the presence of unwieldy archival structures. Still, the influence of coloniality in the categorization must be examined and acknowledged in its influence on knowledge-curating and knowledge-making.

Two notebooks filled with ledger drawings and three drawings on individual bits of paper are held in the KSHS. Each item is housed in a single folder with an accompanying piece of paper that details its provenance, item and call numbers, a short description, and a listing of categories by which the item can be found. These categories vary slightly between each item. (A full list of these categories as prescribed to each item may be found in Appendix A). The categories act as collection tags for topics spanning from Education to People to Places. Each category then divides into more specific tags for further codification. The categories and tags listed on the sheets of paper that accompany items are printed from the *Kansas Memory* online database, which was created to support the KSHS mission— “to identify, collect preserve, interpret, and disseminate materials and information pertaining to Kansas history in order to assist the public in understanding, appreciating, and caring for the heritage of Kansas.” The site itself particularly caters to teachers and educators, with curriculum tags incorporated into the tagging system. For example, “Pictures Drawn by Wild Hog and Other Cheyenne Indians” is

accompanied by category tags for Curriculum, further narrowed to 7<sup>th</sup> Grade Standards and then further by the addition of Kansas History Standards – 1860s to 1870s (Benchmark 3) – Fed. Gov. and Indian Lands (Indicator 1), then a step further into three more tags: Cheyenne, Indian reservations, and Last Indian raid in Kansas. These categories and the increasing specificity create a taxonomy of knowledge, flows of information and classification that filter the drawings into particular silos inherently political.

In these taxonomies of knowledge found within the archive, the ledger drawings are given various categories and tags that may or may not directly correlate to the ledger drawings or the narrative art tradition. Taxonomies often connect the tradition to Arts and Entertainment and Art, yet the sub-tags vary between the items. The first “Cheyenne Indian Drawing” on a single piece of paper is labelled as a Communication Artifact, which underlines the nature of the ledger drawing tradition as a means of communication and narrative within indigenous communities. Yet, the second single-page drawing on file is given an additional tag that does not appear on any other item in the collection: Illustrations. There arises a discrepancy between views and definitions of the work itself, with categories and tags varying between the direct tag of Collections – Manuscript – History – Indian – Ledger art to Type of Material – Illustrations. What emerges is difficulty in figuring out the histories, definition, function, and tradition of ledger art that fits within the taxonomic system that is established by and used by the archive. By sorting these narratives into particular taxonomic categories, the work is abstracted, filtered into other (colonial) narratives that may or may not create or communicate the tradition that extends beyond the page.

Through these categories and tags, the items are also cited with regards to locations, indicating their origin or the area to which their history is associated. For example, *Caddo*

*Women taking repatriation of Ghost Dance Pole into their own hands* by Dolores Purdy Corcoran, titled as “Modern Ledger Art Painting” within the archive, is tagged Places – Cities and towns – Topeka and Places – Counties – Shawnee. This indicates that the painting is associated with these particular search terms and collections. In the case of Corcoran’s work, this makes sense as the artist herself was a resident of Topeka until recently. Though these tags, particularly in certain cases, can be functional in the organization of the archive and the accessibility of content, the categorization of Places creates and maintains a colonized understanding of physical spaces and place as they are associated with the indigenous holdings. Both notebooks also possess similar location tags, linking the drawings to mapped towns and counties within the state of Kansas. The notebooks are categorized with the following tags: Places – Cities and towns – Dodge City and Places – Counties – Ford. This locating through categorization matters. Archives create and maintain national narratives and perceptions of knowledge, including the presentation and legitimization of land ownership, maintaining the narrative of power that ultimately perpetuates the archive itself. That is, by associating the indigenous makings with places like Ford County, indigenous perceptions of the land and memory are erased and silenced. The notebooks in which the Dodge City prisoners drew their narratives and mediated their grief and frustration are known most commonly as the “Dodge City Ledgers,” linked both in the archive and, by extension, history to the very county that charged them with murder.

Perhaps one of the most telling categories associated with the ledger drawings held in the KSHS archive is Thematic Time Period – Immigration and Settlement, 1854 – 1890. This category and tag is used for both notebooks, but neither individual page drawing nor the modern ledger art. This particular tag sorts the ledger drawings into the so-called “Immigration and



Settlement” period. Such a taxonomic definition of the time period may be useful in curating the knowledge associated with a certain number of years within a certain settler understanding of temporality. However, this category is painfully and violently colonized. The time period is noted to begin in 1854, following the violation of treaties between at least 30 tribes, including the Potawatomi, Cherokee, Delaware, and Shawnee, and others. Illegal trespassing settlers pushed into these treated lands for years with the Western march of expansion, with Congress legalizing this “settlement” with the creation of the Kansas and Nebraska Territories by passing the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854. Those settlers who came into the region were impatient to “remove” the peoples who lived in that land, such as the Osages and the Pawnees. Between 1859 and 1883, many Native peoples in these territories ceded their lands and moved south what was left of “Indian Territory,” or were violently “relocated” to other areas. This violence includes the use of “threats, bribes, and promises to force Native people to cede thousands of acres of land, ushering in a second era of Indian removal in which the government forcibly relocated all but a handful of Indian bands from eastern Kansas, opening the territory for railroad development and white settlement” (Trafzer). It is this aggression and trickery that fueled reprisals by Native peoples, which is another means by which the KSHS archive categorizes the notebooks: Military – Wars – Indian Wars.

The “Indian Wars,” sometimes referred to as the “Plains wars” or “Plains Indian Wars,” has been woven into U.S. historical consciousness through the pervasive presence of media and memory marketplaces (Cothran 15). The conflict between the forces of western expansion and the indigenous peoples has been a source of constant revenue for Hollywood productions, through the continuing remembrance, interrogation, and fascination of Indian violence. Notably, Philip Deloria speaks to this centering of Native violence in both media and academia: “Why

were images of Indian violence locked in a nineteenth-century frontier setting even as they proliferated in the representational form of the twentieth century?” (50). Quite often, in the narratives that have arisen in the aftermath of the “Indian Wars,” the U.S. was cast in a light of innocence<sup>15</sup> while indigenous peoples were represented as violent aggressors lacking the moralities of the “civilized,” which media only helped to perpetuate. Public perception of the “Indian Wars” is one of inherent belief that Native people were consistently the violent party. This perception, while perpetuated by media, was also influenced by the federal government through benefits and services provided to the U.S. veterans of the “Indian Wars.” In seeking the support of the federal government, veterans of the Plains conflicts communicated their accounts of the battles that took place as a means of providing evidence to substantiate their claims. The federal government then used these narratives as evidence for the awarding of pension payments. Boyd Cothran argues, “There existed a close connection, then, between the creation and sharing of stories by veterans and the memories that got recorded for the official historical outlets about the Indian wars in the west” (228). The narrative of the “Indian Wars” is one that is steeped in colonial bias, the extent of which is not knowable from the tags and categories assigned to the ledger art held within the archive.

### *Making the Stories (In)visible: The Indian Wars and the Last Indian Raid*

How, then, can archives create and communicate stories regarding items to expand upon these categories and tags? By and large, at the KSHS archive, this is accomplished through short descriptions that accompany each item. Catalogue descriptions create a more comprehensive

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<sup>15</sup> As Marita Struken observes, “This belief in innocence affirms the image of the United States as a country of pure intentions to which terrible things can happen, but which itself never provokes or initiates attack.” *Tourists of History: Memory, Kitsch, and Consumerism from Oklahoma City to Ground Zero*, 15.

contextualization compared to the categorization and tagging used to siphon items into collections. Item descriptions therefore may range from a few sentences to a few paragraphs in length, detailing the context, content, and provenance of the item. It goes without saying that descriptions are also rhetorical and cultural, reflecting textual precedents, as well as practical considerations. Heather McNeil, in her article “What Finding Aides Do: Archival Description as Rhetorical Genre in Traditional and Web-based Environments,” argues that a consideration of archival descriptions as genres that perform particular social actions yields a better functional understanding of the description genre as framed within the archival genre system. Furthermore, they “are shaped by such characteristics of their creators as their social background, education, religion, and gender” as with any other text, which ultimately affects the way the context is established and communicated (Craven 40). As with categorization and tagging, the creation of accompanying descriptions is not without its argument of functionality. This balance between function and cultural bias has long been a debate within the archives and archival research.

With regards to those archives holding Native items, the description may be a space for either contextualization sensitive to indigenous ways of knowing, traditions, and histories, or it can be a thoroughfare through which the colonality of the archive marches on. The description has the potential to be decolonial, in so much as those descriptions acknowledge indigenous histories, perceptions, and cultural teleologies. Otherwise, archival descriptions become another enunciation of Western knowledge. The descriptions provided with the two ledger notebooks, the two individual page drawings, and the modern ledger art piece are the only means by which context is provided. In this project, I consider how these descriptions affect the orientation of knowledge regarding/knowledge within the ledger drawings. That is, I consider how the archival descriptions frame the rhetorical contexts in which the drawings were produced, the cultural and

historical frames that existed at the time of their creation, and the ways in which they may have connection to the past and present narrative art tradition. The descriptions regarding the five items at the KSHS archive seem to possess two particular components: (1) historical context and (2) provenance. The two notebooks possess similar descriptions, with linguistic analysis indicating that two different author voices are present in the separate descriptions, with some sentences being word-for-word.

My emphasis here is not a linguistic analysis of the archival descriptions that accompany the ledger drawings, but a gesture toward recurring themes that are present within these descriptions and how they situate the ledger drawings within a specific rhetorical context. Setting aside the modern ledger art piece by Dolores Corcoran, which will be returned to shortly, the four historical drawings (the two notebooks and two individual pages) share a common moment, so noted by the descriptions that accompany them. Both notebook descriptions reference the September 1878 Cheyenne exodus: “In September 1878, chiefs Dull Knife and Little Wolf left Indian Territory with some 300 Cheyenne bound for their homeland north of Kansas.” The two drawings however use a slightly different description: “The drawings may be related to the 1878 escape of a band of Northern Cheyenne from Indian Territory and their attempt to return to their homeland north of Kansas.” Each description specifically frames this movement, whether the Northern Cheyenne “left” or “escaped” from “Indian Territory,” as the “Dull Knife Raid,” regarded as the “last major conflict between whites and Indians in Kansas.” Each description speaks of the six Cheyenne men who were imprisoned for “atrocities committed during the band’s trek through the state prompt[ing] a severe response from authorities, culminating in a standoff in Nebraska.” A common risk among these descriptions is the privileging of the settler narrative through words that cue aggression: “escape,” “raid,” “atrocities,” “trek.” Further, the

description situates the white as the authority, with the power to keep the indigenous peoples on their lands and to mete out swift and “severe” responses when challenged. This severe response was not merely the arrest of six men, but the massacre of many Cheyenne at Camp Robinson. But this history is not acknowledged.

Both notebooks are then described in terms of their provenance, that is, how they arrived to the archive. While each notebook contains a description of their acquisition, neither single-page drawing description contains such information. These lines of possession follow their own narratives in the archival descriptions, with one notebook donated in 1939 by Dora C. Clayton, whose husband was clerk of the Indian Claims Commission, a committee formed by the Kansas State legislature in 1879 following the Cheyenne exodus (“raid”). The second notebook was donated by Sallie Straughn in 1922. Her husband, John W. Straughn, was the Dodge City jailer during the time that the Cheyenne men were held in the Dodge City jail. The importance of this provenance even goes so far as to become the widely accepted means of identifying these ledgers. Denise Low-Weso and Ramon Powers refer to the two notebooks as the “Wild Hog-Clayton Ledger” and the “Northern Cheyenne-Straughn Ledger,” though they note that the Straughn ledger was actually donated in 1920. My purpose here is not to track the record trails for possession, merely to note the presence of provenance in the description of the ledger drawings held within the archive and the importance that story of provenance plays in the overall narrative that is established by the archive—how it affects the material, how it interacts with the experience, and how it is manifested and inscribed onto the ledgers themselves. This will be discussed further in the next section.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Luciana Duranti and Patricia Franks note that “some archival scholars contend that archivists should consider societal provenance, namely the societal and cultural contexts in which individuals and organizations create records (cited Nesmith 2002, 35).” They further note that “Jeanette Bastian has pushed for such an approach in colonial settings, where archives are created and run by the dominant power but the voices of the colonized can still be found

The question arises: Why look so critically at the categories and tagging and the descriptions that accompany the ledger drawings? This project doesn't seek to perform critical discourse analysis so as to critically engage, say, the number of times a specific term or verb is used. Therefore, why include such a lengthy discussion of category conventions and descriptions? Because the white paper onto which these things are printed is placed in the same folder as the drawings. They are in the same space, they exist together, side by side, and thus they are materially and situationally related. In a sense the crisp white paper that sits on the table top, settled alongside the manila folder, is a relative of the narrative art that is wrapped in the white tissue paper. There is rhetoricity in the materials, in their shared situational space, in the descriptions that accompany them and in the folders and boxes that holds them; each piece is rhetorical. However functional it may be, there is signification there. It is present in the drawings and the information sheet, in the folder and the box, the room at large, the land. These relationships are articulated, exemplified by the folder and what lies within it—the white paper and the ledger drawings. There is dialogue between them.

## **Material Existence, Doing, and Action, My Fingers on the Page**

It is here that we return to Carole Blair's heuristic questions as I consider the material rhetoric of the archive and the dialogue that exists between the various elements of that material rhetoric. The materiality of the archive is multidimensional, apparent not only in the physical object itself, but in the way it is situated, in the context that surrounds it, and the discourses that engage it (Blair 16). The drawings, the information sheet, folder, and box are seen in relationship

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if the actors and processes of archiving are considered in their broader context." *Encyclopedia of Archival Science*, 207.

to the research room, the archive, and the land. Each component creates a layer of experience. This perception of material rhetoric aligns well with Barbara Dickinson's collaborative meaning-making in which material object and the discourses that surround them "collude and collide," as spaces and places are intertextual rhetorical experiences (298). What this requires is an understanding of the body<sup>17</sup> in interacting with these discourses and the spaces that host and inform these discourses. I must consider how I exist within this space and the way I might answer the questions presented by Carole Blair. As presented in Chapter One, Carole Blair's heuristic sets forward the following questions for the consideration of material rhetoric:

6. What is the significance of the text's material existence?
7. What are the apparatuses and degrees of durability displayed by the text?
8. What are the text's modes or possibilities or reproduction or preservation?
9. What does the text do to (or with, or against) other texts?
10. How does the text act on people? (30-45)

Blair frames these questions in such a way that I feel places the most important question first. *What is the significance of the text's material existence?* is inherently a summarizing question that incorporates the discussion of the other four. For this reason, this question will be situated last in the discussion that follows, at the conclusion of this chapter. For the remainder of this section, I will discuss the four questions that lead up to Blair's summative question: *What are the apparatuses and degrees of durability displayed by the text? What are the text's modes or possibilities or reproduction or preservation? What does the text do to (or with, or against) other texts? How does the text act on people?* These questions will be discussed together, in conversation with each other as a nuanced understanding of the material-rhetorical presence of the ledger drawings are considered. Throughout, personal experience within the archive space as it influences and affects the consideration of these questions will be incorporated. I will consider

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<sup>17</sup> Not necessarily a theoretical understanding of "the body" in a sense of embodied rhetorics (see: Daisy Levy's work with embodied rhetorics), but rather the body as it pertains to physical presence and experience.

the material existence of the ledger ‘texts’ as well as the other material ‘texts’ that surround them.

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*As I sit in the research room, it’s quiet save for the soft hum of the air conditioning and the occasional quips of the archivists. They speak of their weekend plans and jokingly warn me not to slip a page from the notebook into my pocket. I gently thumb from one page to the next, using the white tissue paper to spin the little notebook this way and that. The drawings line up like a picturebook, all facing one way and then in the opposite direction facing the other. There is an image that catches my eye, a mother bison and her calf. I sit with it for a long while.*

*Pencil and black ink, no watercolor where the eye is meant to be. The calf is colored gray with the graphite of the pencil. There are red spatters that come through the paper from the other side. The calf is protected between the legs of its mother. The black ink seems darker about the bison’s shoulder.*

*There’s a fingerprint in the ink.*

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### *My Fingers on the Page – Durability, Vulnerability, and Preservation*

History exists somewhere in that room. Perhaps it is in the drawing, imprinted on the back of the mother bison, or on the white piece of paper that describes the notebooks and drawings. In the folders and the boxes. History might be in the concrete walls or in the land under my feet. I’m not sure, even as I navigate my own perceptions of place and space and the ways of perceiving and knowing the world around me. The material rhetorics of the archive are



so complex and multilayered that they are difficult to conceptualize. I am reminded of Malea Powell's interaction with the writings of Charles Eastman at the Newberry:

History isn't a dead and remembered object; it is alive and it speaks to us. We are obligated not just to our ancestors out of whose lives we "make" that history but also to the places and spaces, and the living things therein, who remember them and— through them— remember us. My obligation to the land, my obligation to Eastman, they are both part of the same tradition that requests only that I carry the past into the lived present in a respectful and honorable way (122)

Qwo-li Driskill describes touching the same books as her ancestors as a "Ghost Dance." The tactile feeling of the pages against my fingertips is not a sensation I expected to feel in the archive. I expected white gloves to handle such delicate paper. At first, I was hesitant to handle the notebooks and drawings with my bare hands. The white gloves would have made me more comfortable, as if the gloves could protect the ledgers from damage. The archivist answered my concerns: the white gloves only hurt the documents more. I am warned to be gentle as I turn from one page to the next. This experience was later relayed to Chris Pappan in my talk with him regarding the quality of the paper. That conversation can be found in Chapter Four.

Carole Blair, in her discussion of material rhetoric notes that the durability and vulnerability of the materials is part of their rhetoric. Though her work specifically references the material presence of public memorial sites, Blair's consideration of durability and vulnerability finds a particular resonance in the archive—where pages are fragile and the ephemera seems constantly threatened by wear. There are two issues to consider in conceptualizing durability and vulnerability in the investigation of the ledgers. The first is limited to material preservation. Taken in a literal sense, the durability/vulnerability of a text is tied specifically to its material preservation, and the preservation of that text's active presence. There is a question of what protection can be provided to ledgers wrapped in white tissue paper. In regards to this perception, Blair provides examples of crumbling buildings, vandalized memorials, and the

heckling of an oral speech (37). Certainly, the archive keeps all artifacts in climate-controlled rooms, limits access to the drawings, and provides mounts for the single-page images. Even the building itself, constructed of cottonwood limestone, shows signs of natural wear. The parking lot out in front is cracked and riddled with potholes. The boarding school storehouse across from the archive is well-preserved. In her consideration of Blair's notions of durability and vulnerability, Jennifer Clary-Lemon states that the variation of degrees in material wear is in effect its own sign system. Citing examination of the Canadian Museum for Civil Rights' limestone structure, Clary-Lemon notes that "the durability of the stone may not only be read for its use as a building material, but also its connection to landscape, locality, and history." True enough, the very lobby I entered on my way to visit the ledgers is constructed of quarried limestone between 250 - 275 million years in age.

Why discuss the durability of the archive building itself? Because the building is every bit a text, a material existence, that is situated around the ledger drawings. The building's material construction establishes a narrative that links it to the land, to a sense of 'time-immemorial,' much like the previously mentioned Canadian Museum of Civil Rights. It is a gesture toward permanence. In fact, in a document published in 2011 by the Kansas Historical Society describing the building's interior and exterior features, it is explained that the "subtle use of limestone, metal, and wood both outside and in provide a simple elegance befitting the importance and *permanence* of the institution and its functions" (emphasis mine). I'm reminded of Malea Powell's discussion of the Newberry Library in Chicago— a "textual space designed to intimidate [...] to negate their own temporality and impermanence" (121). She notes that such buildings "manage the physical place upon which the imperial society they represent has engaged in empire into a space of argument for the value of Western culture" (121). Yet, the

building was only just built in 1985. The boarding school mission<sup>18</sup> next to it is a hundred or so years older. There is discourse here, a discourse of material and historical durability. The fragile ledger notebooks and drawings within this space may be perceived as vulnerable by comparison. The fragile pieces, with time-worn pages and brittle corners and binding that has long-since worn away seems infinitely more vulnerable compared to the cottonwood and Tuxedo Gray limestone. In a purely material sense, the ledger drawings are still only paper. Unlike their antecedent ancestors etched onto rock and leather, the ledger drawings are fragile. The lines have faded over time, the edges have frayed, and the corners have turned. The building, with its sturdy limestone walls, might be read as protective, keeping the pages safe, yet it might also be read as imprisonment or as a burial, as limestone is the bedrock of ‘Kansas’ land. By all rights in terms of material durability and vulnerability, the drawings themselves are ephemeral.

Yet, there is a different sort of durability in the ledger drawings’ continued presence, in the continued articulation of its narrative within that physical space. First, it is in the drawings themselves, the color on the page and the horses and animals as they run from one edge of the page to the other. For example, in the image above, a man on a blue horse is hunting a buffalo. The buffalo has two arrows in its back as it is chased across the page. Denise Low-Weso, in her examination of ledger drawings as composite genres, cites Gerald Vizenor’s argument of ledger art’s *transmotion*<sup>19</sup>. In this, Vizenor argues that ledger drawings are linked to an “intangible ‘presence’” and that this presence exists on a level that is not limited to the physical plane.

Further, Low supplies Vizenor’s description of ledger art:

The warriors and their horses are pictured in motion, the artistic transmotion of native sovereignty. The scenes and motion were memories and consciousness, not

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<sup>18</sup> The Potawatomi Mission is noted to be the “visual centerpiece of the State Archives and Library complex (*State Archives and Library Limestone*, Kansas Historical Society pamphlet).

<sup>19</sup> Gerald Vizenor states “the connotations of transmotion are creation stories, totemic visions, reincarnation, and sovenance; transmotion that sense of native motion and active presence, is sui generic sovereignty” (15).

poses and simulations. The transmotion of ledger art is a creative connection to the motion of horses depicted in winter counts and heraldic hide paintings. The hides and shields are visionary (179).

Transmotion, as Sundry Watanabe notes, “indicates Native action [...] is always connected, linked to, or moving across something, other, or time” and that, ultimately, temporality becomes folded and layered as stories are connected between past and present, a movement between various spaces and times (43). In this way, the ledger drawings held by the KSHS archives exist beyond the folders that house them, the boxes they are contained within, and the limestone walls that surround them. In this way, their durability extends beyond the material page into survivance and sovereignty. Rather than being a momentary act of resistance or a singular performance of sovereignty (Pearce), the ledger drawings of these Cheyenne men—their presence, story, memories, consciousness—continue to *actively exist* within and outside of the archival space. Their fingerprints still linger on the page. The images are linked to the limestone walls and to the land beneath them. And the horses race off the page to other locations, to other spaces.

Like Vizenor’s transmotion, Rachel Jackson, in *Red State Re-Claimed: The Transrhetorical Recovery of Resistance in Oklahoma*<sup>20</sup>, defines the concept of *transrhetoricity* as “the movement of rhetorics across multiple location categories—historical, spatial, temporal, cultural, local, regional, national, and global, as well as across disciplines;” therefore transrhetorical awareness “allows [people] to understand a place differently, in terms of multiple sites and voices, and enables them to see connections between people and places, issues and communities” (11, 5). Transrhetorical consideration of meaning-making not only emphasizes place-based manifestations of meaning and the rhetorical work that occurs across ecologies, but also the *action* of that work. The movement and motion—the *trans* that links both transmotion

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<sup>20</sup> Unpublished manuscript provided by the author.

and transrhetoricity— between these materials and across these spaces is present in the ledger art of the Northern Cheyenne men. This motion is not necessarily confined within the tissue paper in which they're wrapped or to the limestone building. In fact, it travels. It moves. It is in each incarnation of the form. It is in the online archive database. It is in the stolen images used on a movie set. It is reproduced, remediated, preserved and enacted in different ways by different people for different ends. Yet its presence remains.

Carole Blair notes that reproduction “is an intervention in the materiality of the text”— there is, of course, a vastly different experience between physical interaction with the ledger notebooks and viewing the images on a computer screen. Though this project does not seek to disappear down the rabbit hole of digital archives and their mediation of material, it is important to note that the most major work done with the ledger drawings held by the KSHS archive was the scanning of each drawing into two online databases, Kansas Memory and the Plains Indians Ledger Art (PILA) Digital Archive. The former is the main way by which visitors to the archive may find archival holdings and acts as a main conduit for researchers to acquire photos of any documents held by the archive, including the ledger drawings. Digital photography is not permitted in the research room; therefore all images are mediated through the Kansas Memory database. However, the images provided in the Kansas Memory database are not very high resolution and are without annotation beyond the previously discussed descriptions, leaving out relevant details regarding the images. With the support of the National Endowment for the Humanities in 2011, Denise Low-Weso, along with Ross Frank of the PILA project and Nancy Sherbert, Curator of Photographs and Special Collections Acquisitions Library/Archives at KSHS, made it possible for high resolution digital images of the ledger drawings to be scanned into the PILA archive. These images are now exclusively available on the PILA website, with no

links to these lower quality images found on the Kansas Memory online records. Though certainly, the existence of these online archives does not necessarily affect the material rhetorics of the ledger drawings or the spaces they are within, these databases do exist in relation to the physical material rhetorics of the ledger art texts in the archive. This is reproduction, a way of mediating the ledger drawings.

The possibilities of the ledgers' reproduction or preservation can be found not only in the online database's digital preservation (a discussion I will return to momentarily), but also in the different ways that the drawings are used—the ways they are enacted by the archive. Blair makes an example of the NAMES Project, describing that the memorial will “preserve all panels to the extent possible and reproduce them in photographs and in photo representations on its web site; however, the literal feel of the panels will be lost, as will the rendered work of therapy for survivors that those panels contain” (38). She describes that changes occur as travelling exhibitions move from place to place. Meanwhile, Jennifer Clary-Lemon notes the three-dimensional and two-dimensional representation of the Canadian Museum for Civil Rights. Clary-Lemon observes: “its two-dimensional signification in graphic representations, iconography, and images, and the ways in which its virtual presence on websites, brochures, and fundraising sites construct a purposive and constraining effort to ‘freeze an experience’ (Blair 38).” Movement, touch, sound, and the physical experience of the material rhetorics within the archive is placed into dialogue with other possible ways of mediating materials through images, websites, various other means of reproducing the texts. The ledger art of the Northern Cheyenne men is on a banner hanging along the wall of the research room. It is on the sign out in front of the complex. It is in the online database and archive website. It is mediated and remediated in a variety of ways for a variety of different purposes.

Earlier, I discussed an image of a hunter chasing a buffalo across the page, arrows protruding from the animal's back as it runs off the page (see Figure 2.1). On the page opposite this scene is a block of cursive text. The notebook must be turned vertically in order to read the cursive handwriting, invoking traditional perceptions of alphabetic writing as the cursive trails along the faded blue lines. The text reads: "These pictures were drawn by Wild Hog and other Northern Cheyenne chiefs while they were confined in the Dodge City jail, in May 1879." This defacement occurred after the creation of the ledger notebooks, a captioning of the context, most likely by a writer removed from the actual context and the artists themselves. Becca Gercken, in her article "Manifest Meanings: The Selling (Not Telling) of American Indian Ledger Art," observes the interaction and tension between written captions and the visual rhetoric of the ledger art of "The Black Horse Ledger." Within that ledger the narrative of the images is threatened by the captions, as a "superficial effort to transform the history by overwriting the images and then through the alphabetic script" (524). The interplay between symbolic systems seems to gesture toward a deeper reproduction of relationship and history. Gercken explains:

The redactor's rhetoric consistently serves to overwrite the Northern Cheyenne historian's intent even as it points to the doubleness and potential undecidability of the distorted images. Indeed, the cursive ink labels work precisely to try to decide the ledger's history. The hegemonic language of the pen and ink labels' alphabetic script do not function to incorporate the ledger book's nonalphabetic semiotic system into American literacy, nor does it work to inscribe Northern Cheyenne history into the American narrative; instead it attempts to alter Northern Cheyenne history to better fit within the colonial fantasy of Manifest Destiny (524).

The script in the ledger notebooks held by KSHS, likely written into the pages over one hundred years ago, and the use of the ledger images in promotional material such as the banner hanging in the research room are connected. They are different means of reproduction, different incarnations

of durability and vulnerability, and different means of *writing coloniality*. One other such manifestation of durability/vulnerability is the sign located at the entrance of the KSHS complex.

The sign in front of the KSHS complex reads “Kansas Historical Society,” situated alongside a ledger page— an incomplete ledger page. A ledger page drawn by Northern Cheyenne men, storied in the archive as prisoners. Prisoners who were survivors of a massacre. Survivors of a massacre after having fled disease and famine on an infertile plot of land far away from their homelands. When asked about the choice to use the ledger art for the sign, a representative of KSHS stated: “the concept of ledger art was chosen along with other types of holdings in the State Archives because they are colorful and because they were created by native peoples and therefore provide a different perspective on Kansas history.” Certainly, there is representation of Native peoples in the use of the ledger drawing, but the *state* is of course centralized. The ledger drawing becomes a visual representation of coloniality, a way to signify both the ‘success’ of the colonial state, and to validate the existence of that state with indigenous imagery. There is a material and rhetorical shift taking place as the images are taken up for the sign and the banner inside the research room. Like the script in the notebook itself, a new narrative is invoked, overwriting the original purpose and meaning of the ledger drawings themselves, as mediums for resistance and survivance. The action shifts and changes along these lines, becoming sharpened and blurred according to the way that these spaces and actions sponsor the material-rhetorical presence of the drawings.

### *The Action of Ledger Art in the Archives*

Considering the action of the ledger drawings, the question arises: *What does the text do to (or with, or against) other texts?* Blair’s question is broad and unfocused, even prompting



Blair to state that “the question is almost unmanageable except in a fully developed critical analysis” (39). Though this project does aim to be a critical analysis that is ‘fully developed,’ the question still necessitates a narrowing in focus. The ledger drawings, and indeed any text, are part of a web of connected texts, woven together and spiraling outward into complex networks. Blair makes the effort to narrow the focus of the question to eight linkages: “enabling, appropriating, contextualizing, supplementing, correcting, challenging, competing, and silencing” (39). I further develop alternative linkages in Chapter Three. Though Blair’s examples are specific to memorial sites, this consideration of networked actions can also be applied to any material text. Clary-Lemon in her application of Blair’s heuristic notes that “differing material-rhetoric accretions invite other networked relationships, calling other texts into being that are enabled and constrained by the [...] material site.” Relation, as I previously noted in this project, is integral to understandings of indigenous and cultural rhetorics. While this speaks to genre systems and networks<sup>21</sup>, this also speaks to *community* and “a web or relations and alliances” that extends beyond the text to Nature, to responsibilities, and to people (Ríos 93, Powell et al 396). While each of the eight linkages noted above are present in the KSHS archive, in one way or another depending on perspective, I will focus on two particular connections: *challenging* and *silencing*.

### *Challenging the Invisible: Critique of Silences in Archives and Museums*

In 2007, Dolores Purdy Corcoran, a well-known contemporary ledger artist, created a ledger art piece entitled “Caddo Women taking repatriation of Ghost Dance Pole into their own

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<sup>21</sup>Lisa King, in her dissertation *Representing the Museum and the People: Rhetorical Sovereignty and the Representational Genres of American Indian Museums*, discusses the genre systems and networks within three museum spaces.

hands.” In this image, seen in Figure 2.3, five women on horseback flee across an 1890 Scranton, KS ledger page from what appears to be Cavalrymen atop horses named *Pot Hunter*, *Grave Robber*, and *Artifact Thief*. The women, in their brightly-colored shawls, carry a sacred Ghost Pole back to their homelands. This contemporary piece of ledger art is the only drawing by a contemporary artist held by the KSHS archive. Under the title “Modern Ledger Art Painting” in the Kansas Memory database, the piece at the time of this writing is on tour with a traveling exhibit. Regardless of its current physical absence, this modern piece’s presence is still felt in the archive through both the online database and conversations of archivists. In the archival description, Corcoran is quoted describing the piece as “contemporary work done in historical fashion dealing with a contemporary issue.” The description goes on to say that issue is “fight the illegal trafficking and looting of American Indian artifacts.” Following a brief summary of the images, it continues to cite Corcoran’s motivation for working with the medium as it is “informed by the ledger art created by the warriors of native tribes while imprisoned in St. Augustine, Florida.”

Richard Pearce, in *Women and Ledger Art: Four Contemporary Native American Artists*, discusses this piece with Corcoran as part of an examination of Corcoran’s motivations in creating ledger art and the connections that she makes between her perspectives, gender roles, and the tradition of the form. Pearce notes that Caddo women were not traditionally warriors, nodding toward the common perception of the ledger art form as warrior art. Corcoran and Pearce discuss many of her contemporary pieces before arriving to the *Caddo Women* ledger. Describing the work, she states:

the warrior women in this ledger . . . are living Caddo women who, right now, are fighting to keep our ceremonies and history alive. In the past 70 years or more, thousands of Caddo graves have been looted for the interstate trafficking of artifacts. This ledger deals with this battle . . . one we are losing. . . . The pot

hunters destroy and disturb the mound and grave sites of our ancestors, and the Caddo people consult with archeologists and anthropologists, since it is against the law to pick up, dig up or remove any artifacts from federal lands or parks. In this ledger the men in uniforms named “Pot Hunter,” “Grave Robber” and “Artifact Thief” are dressed in historical uniforms depicting federal persons. They are dressed [that way] to blend in on federal property so they can loot without being detected. I used the Ghost Dance pole as a figurative example of such a highly prized artifact. In this ledger the women, in their traditional Turkey Dance regalia, are racing away from the black marketers to keep the Ghost Dance pole from becoming an item to be sold and end up in a personal collection. The women have taken repatriation into their own hands by taking over possession of the Ghost Dance pole. For a touch of humor, I included a faceless rider looking out at the viewer. She is inviting those who view the ledger to join her in this battle. A couple of years ago a couple of ladies [found] the Ghost Dance pole after a lot of searching and calling museums. I wanted to make a statement about the black market (quoted Pearce 61-62).

Though likely with a different meaning, Corcoran’s modern piece is on a parole ledger from Osage County, which Pearce notes as “an ironic act of appropriation” (62) Osage County is just a bit south and west of where the Northern Cheyenne men were ultimately released following their ordeal. While Corcoran’s piece directly challenges the stereotype of male “warriors,” Corcoran’s piece also actively engages viewers, “inviting those who view the ledger to join her in this battle.” In the same way, chases are depicted in the older ledger notebooks with faces peering out of the pages. English words are written in blank ink upon Corcoran’s piece, her own handwriting defining the name of her work and the message she intends convey. This, compared to the re-narration of the script in the elder ledger notebooks, is sovereignty.

This modern piece of ledger art challenges. Not only does it challenge the violent practice of stealing cultural artifacts, but it also actively challenges the narrative of what ledger art is and can be. Ledger art itself was often perceived as a male art form, limited to warriors who recorded their experiences in war books. Within the KSHS archive, all other examples of the form are from the nineteenth century, from the perspective of male warriors and prisoners of war. Apart from this example of contemporary ledger art, the form seems temporally-bound to the past. By

way of descriptions within the archive and cataloguing tags, ledger art might have been buried as a form of the past, tied only to the “Immigration and Settlement” time period. The inclusion of Corcoran’s piece in the archive directly disrupts that perception, in both practice and illustration. Unlike the faded colors and frayed edges of the ledger notebooks, *Caddo Women* is fluid in bright colors and clear movement, a sort of vitality that carries from one page to the next across the parole ledger. The art seems less vulnerable, in a way. Its newness, the distinctness of prismacolor pencils and india ink makes the text seem more durable. Further, a female artist created this piece, a challenge in and of itself to the perceived norms of the form. The women seen in the ledger drawing “taking repatriation [...] into their own hands” become warriors in their own right. The defense and articulation of cultural narratives becomes a task for women as well, and the ledger art becomes a form for all genders in conveying individual and community narratives. Ledger art is, in many incarnations, a form of resistance, a way of challenging colonial narratives and perceptions and articulating indigeneity. Just as the ledger notebooks of the Northern Cheyenne men was a means of resistance, this legacy is seen and felt in the hooves and prints in Corcoran’s work.

With this in mind, it is important to consider that the archive has acted and is acting in the construction of historical and contemporary conceptions of indigenous identity. On a Kansas Historical Society webpage, it is stated that “locating sources in a non-literate society requires the use of a variety of governmental and unpublished sources.” Though this is not within the physical or material space of the archive, this conception of indigenous meaning-making practices, literacy, and narrative is seen in the descriptions that accompany the ledger notebooks and individual drawings. Though often labelled with the category *Communication Artifacts* there is no other indication in the informational sheet that accompanies each notebook and drawing

that the drawings possess their own semiotic system. There is no indication that the notebooks are anything more than “flip book” illustrations created by “six Indian” prisoners. *Caddo Women* and the ledger notebooks, as well as the individual sheet drawings, also directly challenge the *silences*—the tense and sometimes violent gaps between the colonial and indigenous perspectives—within the archive.

While the presence of the ledger art in the archive could certainly be read as advocating an awareness of the presence of indigenous bodies in the “state of Kansas,” the categorization and descriptions provided with the historical notebooks seems to undermine this, framing all understandings of the drawings from a colonial perspective while removing the drawings from their original context. For example, this can be seen in the tag *Immigration and Settlement* and the use of location tags for colonial townships. The men are never cleared of their charges in the archive. It can be argued that they cannot speak for themselves, as Liz Rohan notes in “Reseeing and Redoing.” Historiographical work done to improve such descriptions, such as the NEH research performed by Denise Low-Weso, has not been included in the archive, nor is it referenced in any materials associated with the ledger drawings held at KSHS. It is not that the narrative art has been silenced, indeed the narratives are still there in full color, but rather that the institutional framing of that narrative creates blank spaces. Such gaps between the ledger narratives and the genres that surround them fosters particular ways of thinking about ledger narratives, indigeneity, and the presence and action of Native people within the land that is now known as ‘Kansas.’

## **Conclusion: Conversations**

Blair situates *What is the significance of the text’s material existence?* as the initial question for contemplation in the consideration of material rhetorics. While one could argue that

the significance of the ledger art and the significance of the KSHS archive are wholly separate from one another, to do so would be reductive and would erase the relationships that are decidedly present within that space. The meaning and moment of the ledger drawings exists in many different capacities simultaneously, from the KSHS sign on the road to the complex bearing a half-unseen drawing of courtship to the drawings themselves within the archival collections to their existence beyond the archival space. In her discussion of the same heuristic question, Jennifer Clary-Lemon observes “the accretive content generated by this question of the significance of the material, then, can only be considered in relation to subsequent layers that speak to material durability, preservation, multiple texts, and human relationships.” There is a web of relationships that extends from the landscape to the buildings to the stories held within those buildings and the people who are within and around it. The significance of the ledger drawings and the archive are therefore a significance of relationships, and a significance of these two material presences as they exist together.

As noted earlier in this chapter, there exists a sign at the entrance of the archive complex. A ledger drawing from one of the Northern Cheyenne notebooks is situated next to the words “Kansas Historical Society.” Whether to establish the links between that state now known as Kansas or to acknowledge the active presence of Native people within that state, the sign is a moment of “agenda setting” (Blair 35-6). The sign is a representation at the forefront of the Kansas Historical Society and the way it wants to be seen. The intentional use of a ledger drawing rather than other possible representative images of KSHS is a rhetorical choice. Lawrence Prelli, in *Rhetorics of Display*, notes that displays are culminations of processes that “constrain the possible meanings available to those who encounter them” (2). Public memory is shaped by these contestable choices. In a way, the ledger drawing on the sign reads as a

historical negative, or as Elizabeth Stoler describes “reverse-images [that] trace disturbances in the colonial order of things, whose shadows trace the lineaments of potential dissent and current distress” (108). The imposition of the sign along the roadside has significance as well. As further explained by Clary-Lemon, the material existence of a text on a landscape affects public perception, “by virtue of its very appearance on the landscape,” setting forth understandings of the terrain, humans, and texts within that space. In many ways, the sign display— as innocuous though it may seem— focuses the attentions and considerations of visitors as they approach the society complex. If one considers the archive as an extension of the sign’s agenda setting, then the KSHS archive’s significance seems to be the assurance of perpetual recognition of statehood. From the materials of the building’s construction, to the images chosen to represent it, the material-rhetorical presence of the archive centers on self-validation. The ledger drawings, in this sense, almost seem to be secondary to the archive’s coloniality. Even still, the ledger drawings carry with them and articulate the land in a way that is not intervening in the landscape but rather exist alongside it.

The material-rhetorical significance of the ledger drawings is seen not only in the physicality of the building and land, but also in representation. The ledger notebooks and leaflet papers are the only epistemological system outside of Eurowestern meaning-making traditions found within the KSHS archive. They therefore actively challenge notions of what meaning-making is and can be. Likewise, the images speak back to silences and silencing practices within the archival space, and articulate Native rhetorical sovereignty through their lines, colors, and materials. The artists represent themselves, their communities, traditions, and beliefs in the drawings in the best way they could, given their situation. As the images do not change even as the pages fray, the works will continue to be present, articulating identity and indigeneity.

Further, *Caddo Women* (the contemporary piece by Dolores Purdy-Corcoran) and the ledger drawings from long ago *move* in a space that inherently denies action. Joyce Szabo observes that there is a “dynamic sweep of [...] action, a movement of forces too monumental to be contained within the arbitrary boundaries of the page,” and so too, to be contained within the archive. As an institution that thrives on fixity and the ideal of perpetuity, the colonial archive itself would seem to stop motion— with all things in small boxes, and boxes placed on shelves, with set categorization and tags, and durable limestone buildings. Even so, a significance can be found even in this juxtaposition, perceived motion and stillness.

What arises from this movement is the further potential for action. Action that may support the agency and sovereignty of the ledger drawings, and other Native objects, held by state archives and other archival structures. I believe that there is an additional way to consider the question of significance posed by Blair, and that is to consider how that significance might translate to action. By this, I do not mean how the texts might act on people, as I have discussed earlier in this chapter, but rather, how the significance of these relationships, representations, presences, and movement might be made more equitable, responsible, and respectful of Native sovereignty and agency. This discussion however will be furthered in the following chapters. The fact is however, that no element in this study is without motion, action, and movement. There is motion in the conversations between the space, folders, buildings, and drawings. There is motion in the “presence,” as Gerald Vizenor calls it, of the ledger art. The drawings speak back, offering their own perspectives on the history of this land and the people of it. Even in the silence of the research room, they speak back to that space, to the boarding school across the way, to the limestone walls, and to ledger art that is halfway across the country in exhibitions



and national museums, such as the *Unbound: Narrative Art of the Plains* exhibit featured in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Bound and “Unbound”: From the Plains to the City and the Lines Between

*At the front of the circular room, a ledger artist is speaking. His name is Dallin Maybee and the image projected onto the screen behind him is one of SpongeBob on ledger paper. It earns a chuckle from the crowd. He speaks of his motivations in creating ledger art and the history of the form. Another piece is projected, one with slightly more serious subject matter. During the talk, a Curator’s Talk before the opening of the exhibit upstairs, he said: “It’s a way of dealing with trauma. There’s so much hurt and so much emotion. These guys, they needed a way to let it out, so they drew. They drew their stories to work through all that emotion. We draw our emotions.”*

*My mother, who had accompanied me on this trip to see the exhibit open, turned to me. “I understand now,” she whispered. “I don’t think I ever got it before.” I could see it on her face, in slight tilt of her brows as she turned back to the talk. “It was just art before. It’s a way of dealing with...all of it. I can understand that.” It was her shift in perspective that became an integral part of the evening, a shift we discussed later as we returned to our hotel room.*

*We walked around the exhibit, from the glass-covered Fort Marion ledgers and their digital counterparts to the elkskin robes laid out just a few feet away, open to the space. Early nineteenth next to 2010, horses running from one hide to the next.*

*We spent a while in the red Discovery Room, listening as Lauren Good Day Giago described a dress created in honor of her grandfather. Hanging from a counter across from the digital display was hide and muslin. I ran the materials under my fingers and looked at the*

*words painted along the wall. Telling Stories. Describing. Identity. Horses. Stories. Flat. Colors. Buffalo. Battle. Name Glyphs. Ceremony.*

*“After that talk,” my mother told me, “I saw everything in that exhibit differently. It became more of an experience than a piece of art on the wall. I never thought about that before.”*

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## **Introduction and Background: Museums as Dynamic Innovation**

The National Museum of the American Indian, New York (NMAI-NY) George Gustav Heye Center displays thousands of items across various geographic regions, hosts cultural and community events, and showcases Native filmmakers from across North America. The building that houses the NMAI-NY collections sits low among the skyscrapers of Lower Manhattan, next to Battery Park and within view of the Statue of Liberty. An ode to the early years of the twentieth century, the building is amass with sculptures, time-greened copper adornments, and looming stone columns. At the front of the building, sculptures depict four of seven continents—*Asia*, *America*, *Europe*, and *Africa*— an embodiment of Western imperialist perceptions of the world. The sculptural representations of *Asia* and *Africa* stand at the far edges of the building, perhaps even the ‘fringes of the world’: *Asia* sits on a mound of skulls with a slave kneeling at her side while *Africa* leans half-nude and slackened against a lion. *America* and *Europe* guard either side of the main building entrance, as Peter van Alfen describes, “present[ing] almost self-congratulating images of advancement and intellect” (“Monuments, Medals, and Metropolis”). The sculpture of *America* (see Figure 3.1) is described as “active, about to rise” as she holds corn in her hands and a man kneels at her side, each representing prosperity and labor respectively

(Kaplan 156). At her right shoulder, “an American Indian looks into the future” (157). The sculptures are a visitor’s first introduction to the space. Their presence intimidates, eschews temporality, and seems to frame the museum space with Western imperialism.

The NMAI-NY is not unfamiliar with criticisms regarding the inherent imperialism present in its physical location within the repurposed Alexander Hamilton United States Custom House. Built in 1907, the Alexander Hamilton Custom House appears to be, as Monika Siebert argues, an “unequivocal and celebratory expression of American imperialism.” Siebert, in *Indians Playing Indian: Multiculturalism and Contemporary Indigenous Art in North America*, levels several harsh criticisms of individual sovereignty. Likewise, Siebert also briefly critiques the NMAI-NY’s location at a nexus of coloniality:

Its massive central rotunda is decorated by Reginald Marsh’s frescos celebrating the discovery and conquest of the Americas in images of transatlantic trade and portraits of Columbus, Vespucci, Hudson, Cabot, and Verrazano. Historically, it served as a location where import duties were levied. And while the resulting irony may in the end be productive, if also lost on some visitors—the disjunction between the building and the exhibitions inside [forces] the visitors to consider indigenous material culture in the context of European colonialism rather than as merely a collection of beautiful objects for aesthetic contemplation (56).

There is a definite tension between the indigenous material culture of the NMAI-NY and the custom house as it stands. Various histories, cultures, perspectives, and narratives exist within that single space. As Siebert observes, this “disjunction between the building and the exhibitions” creates an opportunity for dialogue. Perhaps, in a way, this is best illustrated by an examination the frescos of the rotunda and the narrative art of the *Unbound: Narrative Art of the Plains* exhibit. The images painted onto the ceiling of the rotunda, like the sculptures at the front of the building, are almost ironic in their representation of “the discovery and conquest of the Americas.” Meanwhile the *Unbound: Narrative Art of the Plains* exhibit celebrates the art of

indigenous peoples as they relate histories, relationships, personal narratives, and perceptions of the world.

The emphasis of this project is not the museum practices, as important as they are, at work in the exhibit's curation and display, but rather the ledger art— the representation, mediation, and presence of these pictorial narratives within the museum space, and the interactions of those narratives with other texts that surround them. One example of this is the previously mentioned dialogue between the ledger art of *Unbound* and the frescos of the rotunda: two very different modes of narrative symbolism within the same space, speaking from different perspectives with different aims, yet still in conversation with each other by their shared presence. Conquest and survival in spite of conquest, in a sense. As a visitor enters the exhibit, a fresco image is painted above the doorway: a tugboat named *Calumet* and the SS Washington in New York Harbor, framed by portraits of Giovanni da Verrazano and Christopher Columbus. The images are, without a doubt, a material-rhetorical presence that cannot be ignored or separated from the ledger art within the exhibit proper. As the visitors step through the glass doorway to the *Unbound* space, they are introduced to a different material presence. A deerhide shirt, with beadwork and quillwork, tells the story of a warrior, someone of great importance to their community. The two different visual depictions of narrative exist together, alongside each other, in a way that places them into conversation by their shared space.

Museums, in a variety of ways, are dynamic in their definitions and functions, which vary broadly across sources. Generally, the museum is understood as a body that collects, exhibits, preserves, and educates, usually centered on a particular theme. Much like the archive, the museum could be seen as the selection, conservation, and articulation of intersections for public audiences. Of course, what one must first acknowledge in the consideration of this space is its

colonial history: the coloniality of museums, the centrality of Eurowestern concepts in the curation and articulation of museums, and the work of indigenizing museum practice (Barringer and Flynn; Edwards, Gosden and Phillips). With the passage of the National Museum of the American Indian Act in 1989 and the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) in 1990, the repatriation of Native remains and materials was named an issue of human rights. Both acts make the argument that “Native Americans ought to have greater access to information about what is in collections, how collections are curated and studied, and what their appropriate final disposition ought to be” (Erickson 62). The curation of Native American material culture since then has undergone global revision, with knowledge and meaning-making structures other than the previously centralized Eurowestern approaches challenging coloniality that is present in museum practices. With the opening of the George Gustave Heye Center in 1994, these “traditional” perceptions of museum-hood were challenged. In situating the first incarnation of the National Museum of the American Indian within the Alexander Hamilton U.S. Custom House, two ways of making meaning were placed into dialogue with one another— an intensely colonial building and an indigenous museum. Like the ledger art form, Native American meaning was and is inscribed on an institutional material presence. The custom house and a ledger book are different incarnations of the same institutionalized system. Both are representative of colonial narratives, material manifestations of institutional dynamics that communicate and mediate colonial economic and cultural narratives and value systems. The inscription of Native presence onto these material presences—the pencil and paint of drawings on ledger paper and the repurposing of a building meant to portray imperial grandeur and permanence—is certainly a dialogue, a conversation between created intent and lived experience.

Viewing the narrative art of the *Unbound* exhibit and the frescos of the rotunda as conversational rather than restrictive allows for further consideration of the material-rhetorical relationships within the museum space itself<sup>22</sup>. From the building in which the National Museum of the American Indian resides to the materials held within it, the grappling between these texts is important to the overall understanding of that transrhetorical space, and the way that that transrhetoricity supersedes glass cases and walls. This chapter considers the material-rhetorical presences of the *Unbound: Narrative Art of the Plains* exhibit at the National Museum of the American Indian in New York, lingering particularly on the interactions of past and present ledger art, other material forms of narrative art, and the space in which these items exist. First, I offer a brief overview of indigeneity in museum spaces, echoing discussion regarding the archive in the previous chapter. Much work has been done in the active indigenization of museum practices and the rhetoric of those practices within and by communities. This chapter will not provide in-depth discussion indigenization of museum spaces and practices, but rather will focus on the material presence of the ledger and narrative art featured in the museum's exhibit, and how the context of the museum affects the narrative art held within it and vice versa. One example of this is the interaction between the ledger art and frescos within the same space. I then consider the ledger art of the exhibit in conversation among the various materialities represented with and around that space, from the digital mediation of texts to the physical location of the museum to the flow of bodies through the exhibit space. This discussion, like discussion of the

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<sup>22</sup> In the inaugural "Our Peoples" exhibit at the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C., the museum requested that visitors to the exhibit to consider the ways that knowledge is made, curated, and understood within the exhibit and the museum at large. Visitors were challenged to "explore this gallery. Encounter it. Reflect on it. Argue with it." This was situated alongside the opposing images of George Gustav Heye and the George Catlin portraits of Native leaders, both of which are colonial in their own particular ways. The exhibit's metadiscourse engages the coloniality of the images, and the way that knowledge is influenced and organized, challenging visitors to grapple with meaning-making when faced with various narratives (King, *Representing the Museum and the People: Rhetorical Sovereignty and the Representational Genres of American Indian Museums*).

archive in Chapter Two, uses Carole Blair's material rhetorics heuristic to guide observations. These considerations will connect to the ledger art held at the Kansas Historical Society archives as well as take part in a continuing conversation between material-rhetorical forms and space. Ultimately, this observation of the material-rhetorical presences within the *Unbound* exhibit notes transrhetorical conversations between materials in ways that decolonizes the museum space itself, reconsidering the way material relationships are understood within institutional spaces and how scholars within the field of Rhetoric and Composition can come to understand these material relationships and conversations.

## Methodological Overview

Observation of the *Unbound: Narrative Art of the Plains* exhibit is relatively limited, with a single on-location observation taking place on March 10, 2016. This observation followed attendance of the Curator's Talk, which is mentioned occasionally in the exhibit analysis. The Curator's Talk was a short presentation in which the exhibit's leader curator, Emil Her Many Horses (Oglala Lakota), described the concept and curation of the exhibit's materials. Three artists included in the exhibit then spoke at that presentation regarding their own work: Chris Pappan, Dallin Maybee, and Lauren Good Day Giago. Conversations with two of these three artists that were present that evening will be included in Chapter Four, detailing the way they perceive their own art within the museum space and in relation to the work around it<sup>23</sup>.

Following the Curator's Talk, the exhibit was photographed and mapped, noting the position of the exhibition sections, the sequence of artists, the position of three-dimensional work, open-air

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<sup>23</sup> Artist interviews are included in a separate chapter in order to provide ample space for the full discussion of their work, our conversation, and further consideration regarding how artist voices are present in the dialogue of the exhibit. This would provide too much content for a single chapter.



pieces, and multimedia/interactive exhibition modules. There is certainly a limitation to this study as the experience of visitors is absent from analysis.

Analysis of the rhetorical presence of the ledger drawings within the exhibition and their relationship with the material and spatial rhetorics that surround them within the museum requires that I enact as a mixture of methods. The observations included in this discussion then are supplemented by analysis of the metadiscourse that accompanies the exhibit's materials (such as descriptive panels and informational placards), promotional imagery associated with the exhibit, and social media presences. The interactions between these various materials, and their effect on the relationships and transrhetorical presence of the narrative art in the *Unbound* exhibit are integral to this project. Each component of observational data builds a comprehensive look at the exhibit's rhetoricity and how that rhetoricity exists in relation to the narrative art held within it. As with the archive, the observation of the *Unbound* exhibit at the NMAI-NY will be analyzed with an eye toward Blair's five heuristic questions. As a reminder, those questions are:

1. What is the significance of the text's material existence?
2. What are the apparatuses and degrees of durability displayed by the text?
3. What are the text's modes or possibilities of reproduction or preservation?
4. What does the text do to (or with, or against) other texts?
5. How does the text act on people? (30-45)

Certainly, museums have often been considered as *material rhetoric* through their construction of participation and aesthetics (Clark), the intersections of memory, culture, and history (Taylor), and their roles as places of public memory (Blair, Dickinson, and Ott). William Gaudelli and Amy Munger in "Presencing Culture: Ethnology Museums, Objects, and Spaces" argue that museums be seen as texts, centering discussion on the material objects contained within museum spaces to see "what interpretations spring from them and how their extraction fundamentally alters their meaning" (41). However, Jennifer Clary-Lemon extends this consideration of a

museum's rhetorical presence(s) to encompass not only the objects held within a museum space, but also rhetoricity of the "geographic, emotional, and pedagogical imprints inherent in the creation and appearance on a particular external local landscape." The museum as material rhetoric aligns with the distinctions set forth by Carole Blair, Barbara Dickinson, and Brian Ott regarding public memory as "meaningful, legible, partisan, and consequential" (2). No component of the museum's material-rhetorical presence— from the objects held within it, the outreach that it performs, the building it inhabits, to the landscape it disrupts— is without meaning. NMAI-NY is noted by Amanda Cobb as an "instrument of self-definition and cultural continuance" through the use of an "instrument of colonization and dispossession," citing the museum as a space for both sovereignty and alliance. The building and the museum housed within it articulates a contradiction, a network of alliance relationships that are as important as the exhibits themselves.

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*We walked through one of the exhibits— the Infinity of Nations—and found ourselves searching through the displays for narrative art. There were two ledgers there. I stood in front of one for a time, looking at the ochre-colored antelope as it bounded from one side of the page to another. It reminds me of a similar drawing at the archive, but the color varies from a sort of burnt rust color to a dull yellow. It is displayed on a single page and another ledger is positioned above it, always situated on a thin pedestal. They're between ceramics and a hugely bustled white dress.*

*"Are the ones in the archive Lakota?"*

*She looks down at the open ledger book again. I follow her attention.*

*“Oglala Lakota. No, they’re Northern Cheyenne.” I thought for a moment. “And Caddo, too. The modern piece is by an artist who is of the Caddo nation.”*

*My mother nods and leans down to get a closer look. It’s her first look at a ledger in-person. It would still be several hours before we toured the Unbound exhibit later in the evening. “Is this like what you see in Kansas?”*

*“The ones in the archive are smaller, but it looks similar. It really does, but they’re coming from the same land. Kind of.”*

*“Same experiences? No, nevermind. I asked before I thought. Of course it’s not the same experiences.” She moves along the wall and around the exhibit and I trail after her until she gestures up to a display with a smile. “Smoky mountains. Can you pronounce that?” I look up to see a translation of ‘smoky mountains’ in Cherokee, but not with syllabary letters. I remember listening to Ellen Cushman speak in Madison and the discussions my fellow Institute colleagues had about listening. I try a couple test pronunciations before guiltily shaking my head. “I never got to take that Cherokee language class.”*

*“I forgot about that. A lot happened and you couldn’t take it.”*

*We continue through the exhibit.*

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## **Context, Colors, and Complex Relations**

As mentioned earlier, the NMAI-NY seems to sit at a nexus of coloniality not unlike the archive in Kansas. While the Kansas State Historical Society archive is positioned on a spur of the Oregon Trail next to a former boarding school, the National Museum of the American Indian in New York is situated in the heart of Lower Manhattan, in what is called the Battery. Within the Alexander Hamilton U.S. Custom House, the NMAI-NY’s Gustave Heye Center is

surrounded by skyscrapers on what was once called *Manahatta*. The Lenape, the original inhabitants of what is now known as Long Island, called the river at the back of the U.S. Custom House *Shatemuc*, or “the river that flows both ways.” The NMAI-NY provides a pamphlet on this history at the front desk of the museum. While the National Museum of the American Indian on the National Mall in Washington is constructed of sandstone and surrounded by gardens that invoke a natural landscape, the NMAI-NY clearly and starkly occupies a space that both contradicts and underlines its message of Native presence and rhetorical sovereignty. The space, in essence, is complex and complicated. While earlier in this chapter, I described the physical building and colonial presentation, here I make a connection between that building, the museum it houses, and the land on which it is constructed. An understanding of this space is necessary in the subsequent consideration of the material-rhetorical presence of the ledger drawings within that space and the layers of experience that exist in the discourse those drawings represent. Considering the interaction between the land and the museum is hardly new (Sleeper-Smith; Spruce and Thrasher) especially in regards to indigenous museological practices. The landscape affects the museum in a way that is multifaceted, far beyond the rhetoricity of ecological context.

Unlike the Kansas Historical Society archives, where the ledger drawings were somewhat linked to the land on which they were housed, the ledger drawings at the NMAI-NY are far removed from the homelands of their creation. Instead of plains to the north, south, east, and west, there are buildings that tower overhead. The NMAI-NY is likewise removed from its Washington counterpart, where indigenous considerations of land and ecology factored heavily into the spatial design of the museum, even to the creation of space for animals, water features, and gardens. It would therefore seem that the NMAI-NY location is disconnected, in a way, from the natural world. Battery Park is situated to the southeast of the building, the only speck of

green in a landscape of stone and metal. From the Plains to the City, native presence continues however. Native communities within the city often engage with the NMAI-NY as it hosts a variety of community events, cultural presentations, and other such engagements. Some such presentations and events have been centered on narrative and ledger art throughout the *Unbound* exhibit's tenure at the museum, bringing local indigenous populations into contact with the art.

Nevertheless, it must be noted that the narrative and ledger art within the exhibit is—by and large—removed from its cultural context. Though certainly placed strongly within the long Plains tradition of narrative art, the variations between culturally-situated ledger art are largely absent, as is any information that links the narrative art to specific land areas associated with the Plains or tribal nations. Though tribal affiliations are listed for each piece and artist, the exhibition is largely divorced from land-based context including the land upon which it is housed as the exhibition situates narrative art as a form solely associated within the Plains. This is not uncommon. Museums, often museums that house and display indigenous or non-Western objects, are often critiqued with regard to the contextual-sterilization of objects. Though nearly each object featured within the exhibit is accompanied by a description, in terms of material-rhetorical relationships to land and the building itself, there is a disconnect.

It is this disconnect that necessitates the near constant inclusion of artist voice throughout the exhibit space. Often accompanying descriptions attempt to contextually situate the narrative and ledger art, as will be further discussed later in this chapter. The museum descriptions are extremely influential to the overall rhetoric of the exhibit, placing the narrative art tradition within the larger scope of Native history and meaning-making while leaving regionally-bound or tribally-bound meanings to the individual descriptions accompanying the objects. Though this does not make up for the divorce from the original context of the object's material production, it

does position the objects in relation to the museum space and to each other in a larger temporal or thematic pattern within the exhibit space. Despite this perceived disconnect from land and origin, the items within the museum are treated carefully and with cultural respect. One way that this is done is through the cleansing of the exhibit with sage before being opened to the public. Though existing within a space that is incredibly colonial, the NMAI-NY still maintains indigenous and Native presence and identity.

### **Display Cases, Glass Walls, and Sage**

*We stood in the entrance hall, speaking with a man at the front desk. He'd been very helpful since we arrived. I asked him about the Unbound exhibit, where the Curator's Talk would be held later that evening, and told him about my project. We spoke for several minutes. He gave me contact information and an assortment of outreach materials to take home with me. As he did this, he came around the desk and stopped, gesturing toward the closed-off entrance of the exhibit in the central rotunda.*

*"See those people standing in front of the exhibit entrance?" I nodded and he smiled at me. "Those are a few of the artists and their families. They're here to bless the exhibit before it opens."*

*"Bless the exhibit? So they're holding a prayer?" My mother steps up beside us, watching as the artists continue to gather at the door.*

*"They'll hold a prayer and smudge with sage to bless the exhibit and remove any negative energy from the space. It prepares the pieces in there and the space for the exhibit's opening."*

*“A clean slate,” my mother murmured. I remembered thinking, as the door opened to the exhibit and the small crowd walked inside, that I needed to make sure I entered the exhibit that evening with good thoughts. In all honesty, it did make me approach the works in the exhibit with a sort of renewed excitement, with the best intentions I could put in my mind and heart.*

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Depending on which entrance through which a visitor enters the exhibit, the narrative of the exhibit’s structure changes. Entering from the main rotunda, a visitor is first introduced to a glass-encased war shirt with black pictographs depicting battles as the arms are outstretched to display wing-like fringe along the sleeves (see Figure 3.2). The shirt is clearly old, an audience can quickly figure the age to be at least a century. It provides a sense of a *beginning*, a base of the past from which the audience can eventually understand contemporary work of Native artists within the same tradition. Above that shirt, the title of the exhibit is displayed *Unbound: Narrative Art of the Plains* with a line extending from the ‘o’ of *Unbound* through the other letters of *bound*, as if severing bindings to what might be considered “traditional” or “known” by the audience. The visitor then can enter into the “From Past and Present” section to the right or the “Warrior Art” section to the left, either pathway leads to the visual expression of prior generations. At the other entrance of the exhibit, from the *Infinity of Nations* exhibit, Dallin Maybee’s “Conductors of Our Own Destiny” introduces visitors to the contemporary work of ledger artists (see Figure 3.3). With its bright colors, popular culture references, and large steam engine train moving across the large hide, Maybee’s work presents a different sort of introduction to the “narrative art of the plains,” one that firmly situates narrative art in the here-and-now-and-then, rather than simply *then*. While the shirt is protected behind glass, Maybee’s hide is open to the air, situated behind a rope barrier. As seen in Figure 3.2 and Figure 3.3, the

two are clearly intended to be in harmony with one another. Even the paint schemes between the two are negative, the inverted schemes of cream on gray and gray on cream. What emerges in this presentation is a sort of vitality. Though there are many generations between the shirt and hide, they exist together and they are part of a long-standing tradition of Native expression.

The narrative art tradition is repeatedly framed as continuous, long-standing, and durable throughout the *Unbound* exhibit. Here, I take inspiration in Blair's consideration of durability and vulnerability seen in the heuristic questions. In metadiscursive description panels provided along with these introductory narratives, the narrative art tradition is described as "dynamic" and innovative. With each new influence or obstacle encountered, Native artists found new ways to tell and/or record their experiences, to "address cultural upheaval," and consider a wide array of topics, "from ceremonies to family histories to humor and contemporary life." In the archive, durability was linked to the ledger drawings' continued presence in the archive—the fact that the narrative was still present, still in motion, and still extending beyond the pages of those small notebooks to other places and spaces, to survivance and sovereignty and indigenous identity. Similarly, within the exhibit, this same sort of understanding is present. Notions of durability and vulnerability are part of the rhetoric of the drawings and their exhibition within the exhibit. The open-air contemporary hide and the glass-encased historical shirt each denote different types of durability and vulnerability. While the shirt may be perceived as more vulnerable due to its need to be situated within glass, and its age, its presence and the articulation of its stories continues. As the description particular to the piece explains, the shirt's importance is its age as a "very early piece," depicting the accomplishments of a very important warrior. That warrior's battles are still clear and the beadwork continues to rest upon the shirt's shoulders.



At the other end of the exhibit's spectrum, the younger hide piece of Dallin Maybee speaks to contemporary Native sovereignty as a beaded train steams across the robe and bison run from right to left among cars and motorcycles. The cars and motorcycles are part of a personal narrative of Maybee; his '69 Impala is painted in white in the lower portion of the hide. Above the beaded steam engine are lodges of varying colors and patterns. The lodges are noted by Maybee in the description to represent family members. The robe speaks to the impact of the train on the bison herds of the Plains and the devastation of the bison population following the introduction of sports hunting. On this hide, however, it is not a white man conducting the train. In the accompanying description of the piece itself, Maybee states:

I decided to put an Indian conductor at the front of that train as a symbol, a manifestation that many tribes today, and many individuals are using their inherent sovereignty to strengthen themselves, strengthen their cultural identity, who they are. And so that conductor represents that new found strength, as well as that strength that has always been there to take often very horrific experiences and turn them into something we can own, and then use to guide us into the future.

Maybee's piece is a statement of Native sovereignty— individual, intellectual, and rhetorical. The deerskin endured time well, continuing its presence into today. In much the same way, other hides in the exhibit demonstrate that this piece will also be durable, much like the strength of the narratives it communicates. The materials themselves and their narratives are rhetorically durable; likewise that perceived durability is also translated to the rest of the *Unbound* exhibit regardless of which entrance a visitor comes through. With 76 total objects in the exhibit, 17 historical and 59 contemporary, the tradition represents the evolution and recurrence of the art form. A fact sheet regarding the exhibit's materials, artists, and spatial measurements can be found in Appendix B. The tradition, this image-based way of telling, showing, and making meaning, moves from past to present and present to past—a different kind of durability than Blair notes in her consideration of material rhetorics. Blair considers durability in the sense of

preservation or continued physical presence, aligning durability with the material composition of a building, the interruption of a speech, and the longevity of a material text. However, durability within the *Unbound* exhibit is found in not only the substance of the pieces, but also in the life of them. Blair's conceptualization of material rhetorics as durability only in a sense of physical presence is therefore unsettled a bit here. The dynamic transmotion of the ledger and narrative art within the exhibit moves both in tandem with and against Blair's perception of durability, becoming "unbound" in its own way from material understandings of durability and expanding to continued traditions.

### **Across Time: Past and Present and Future**

Past and present are constantly in dialogue throughout the exhibition, from the entrances to the physical proximal situation of historical and contemporary narrative art pieces. Particularly catching in this evoking of conversation between temporalities is the "From Past to Present" section, which is situated to the right of the rotunda entrance. Upon entering the exhibit, a visitor is immediately introduced to the continuum of Native visual expression through the mounting of various narrative art examples in pairs: one example from the past, one example from the present. Throughout the first room, the exhibition move from past to present, present to past, past to present, present to past. The section features various examples of narrative art: winter counts, hide war records, toy tipis, and dresses. The connection between these various forms and ledger art is made clear in the section epitaph:

Viewed together Plains narrative artworks from the past and present reflect a strong sense of cultural identity. As life on the plains changed, artists used pictorial storytelling to record the past and preserve their culture. Hallmarks of the narrative, or ledger, art form—representational figures, strong solid colors, events shown in sequence, and stylized symbols—are visible throughout this exhibition.

Whether working 150 or five years ago, Native artists have used this style to express what is important to their personal and communal lives.

The description frames the progression and relationship of the various exhibit pieces within the room, which begins with winter counts and progresses to war records, toy tipis, and finally, dresses. Each demonstrates different approaches to the tradition of narrative art. Within this particular section, I will consider the ways that these texts interact with each other—the ways that the texts might disrupt past and present divisions, mark and delineate old and new textual variances, and converse in the overall narrative of the space.

The first pair of texts in the circle of the room is a winter count. Winter counts are considered something of an ancestor to modern ledger art, using similar pictographic images to create a calendar-based history of a community. With each annual cycle marked by winters, a *winter count* is a method of keeping a record of a community's events and the passage of time. For each year, an image is chosen to represent it. Winter counts become the narrative art of entire communities spanning decades, usually drawn by historians and record-keepers in the community who are trusted with keeping the winter count. Situated within a glass case, the Long Soldier Winter Count spans from 1798 to 1902. The description notes that “while the artists are unknown, the Hunkpapa Lakota chief Long Soldier described the drawings for an interpreter.” From this, the count is known as the Long Soldier Winter Count. The count, which is tacked onto a white display, leans slightly out from the blue wall, a circular record denoting the passage of years and the events that characterized that year. It is noted in the description that the count begins in the upper left corner and moves clockwise. In the images, one can see the arrival of small pox with the figure of a man covered in small black marks and a falling star or meteorite as it fell across the Plains. This represents over 125 years of history.

As the visitor steps past the Long Soldier count and its faded grays, browns, oranges, and reds on woven muslin, they encounter a much more recent winter count with symbols recognizable to many. A tornado tears its way through a town, a church burns, and a soldier stands beneath a Hopi, United States, and POW/MIA flag. Bright colors and a hard surface that gleam a little under the exhibit lighting. This is Martin E. Red Bear's Winter Count. In the work, Red Bear creates "a modern version of a Plains traditional method of recording history" to bring together his "contemporary life with his tribal identity" (*description*). A mixture of personal and community events, the count tracks from right to left and then left to right as one progresses from the lower right hand corner, though the accompanying description only mentions a few of the images and their meanings, such as a personal viewing of a lunar eclipse with family and President Bill Clinton's visit to the Pine Ridge Reservation in 1999. In the accompanying smartphone app, three of the images (1984, 1992, and 2004) are explained by Red Bear himself through voice recordings that play through the application. What emerges in the work of Red Bear is the full-color story of an artist and a community.

Displayed side-by-side, the Long Soldier Winter Count and Red Bear's contemporary piece speak to a continuing tradition. There are only seventy-two winters between the two. Though this certainly heralds the endurance and durability of narrative art, it also showcases the balance of exception and adherence to tradition. In Chapter Two, I discuss Carole Blair's consideration of the question regarding what texts do to (or with, or against) other texts, citing her eight possible linkages between texts as "enabling, appropriating, contextualizing, supplementing, correcting, challenging, competing, or silencing" (39). As these two material-rhetorical texts, as well as others within this space, exist together and articulate their presences, I believe that one more linkage might be made in addition to Blair's eight. Rather than enabling,

appropriating, contextualizing, supplementing, correcting, challenging, competing, or silencing, I see these winter counts as *continuing*. The other linkages do not correctly articulate the connection between the two texts. Though *enabling* or *supplementing* may capture aspects of the relationship between the Long Soldier and Red Bear counts, *enabling* implies a sort of encouragement (which could potentially be seen as the Long Soldier count enabling the later creation of the Red Bear count) while *supplementing* “transmute[s] the [text] from a completed text to a context for individual, but still public, memory practices” (which could also be seen in a new iteration of winter count tradition). However, *continuing* best recognizes the linkages between the material-rhetorical texts featured in the exhibit.

The sense of a continuum between texts, a sense of movement between them from past to present with the recurring invocation and innovation of the traditional form is creates a *continuing* sense of interaction and influence. There is no aggression between the two counts, nor any sense that one is erasing or *silencing* the other. Likewise, there is no sense that the texts are *competing*, *correcting*, or *challenging* each other. While certainly the Long Soldier count might been seen as historically *contextualizing*, to view it as merely that would be to negate its contemporary action. Therefore, the counts *continue* to be present, to adapt and tell the stories of individuals and communities, and to interact with each other merely by situation in a shared space. A visitor reads them together, inferring a tradition that is recurring and reiterated. Faded oranges and reds become vibrant in the contemporary version, yet the action and friction in the pieces remains the same.

In that shared space of the “From Past to Present” section, the war record hides, toy tipis, and dresses share a sense of a *continuing* tradition. They each seem to continue each other, not necessarily through the same communities and individuals, but through sustained invocation of

narrative art practice. Within the “From Past to Present” space, narrative art is consistently framed as continuing, with each example moving backward and forward in time.

Past to present, present to past. As the visitor arrives to the hides after stepping away from Red Bear’s Winter Count, they are greeted again by the present and David Dragonfly’s 2010 elkhide honoring Little Calf. The hides are tacked onto slanted displays, open to the air, and are protected by a barrier to keep the audience about three feet removed from the hides. Along the wall to the right of the hide is a description of the hide’s scenes with mocked-up black echoes of the images on the hide tacked onto the wall for the audience to decode the hide’s narrative, *supplementing* and *supporting* the elkhide’s material-rhetorical presence by making the meaning accessible to broader audience. This legend provides the audience with a practical way to understand the narrative of the hide. For example, “Scenes C and E depict Little Calf raiding enemy horses. Scene D shows a hunt in which buffalo are driven over a cliff.” These legends are present at various intervals throughout the exhibit, providing the audience with keys by which they can understand the narratives that are being told.

The legends can also be considered another material rhetoric that is present within the exhibit space. Though they are the same images that are painted onto the hides, they serve a different purpose on the wall— as supplemental, screened echoes of the images painted on the hides. The legends are supplemental in what they *do* as they support the overall understanding of the hide text, thereby allowing visitors to interact and understand better the narratives on the hides. This is certainly rhetorically significant in the rhetoric of the exhibit space, as well as in the understanding of the material rhetorics of the ledger art seen later in the exhibit as it establishes the symbolic action of the particular images on the elkhides. This therefore cues the audience into understanding the mnemonic nature of the drawings in practice as they learn

through these supplemental images. As the horses run from the elkhide of 2010 to the 1920 White Calf robe situated next to it, the visitor observes both the elkhide as a whole and the individual stories and images to which the accompanying well-screened legend indicates. Honoring Mountain Chief, a Blackfeet chief, the robe depicts war parties, horse raids, scouting, and even the killing of a bear. Each of these feats are denoted in a black images screened onto the nearby wall as well.

Such supplemental actions are present throughout the exhibit, with screened legends, descriptions, and multimedia elements *supporting* the individual works and the overarching theme of continuity and recurrence. Though perhaps this past-to-present/present-to-past structure may be seen as irrelevant, particularly to this project's overall focus on ledger art, it is essential in the later examination of the material-rhetoric of the exhibit's ledger art. Given their proximity and shared space, the structure of this initial room creates the schema by which visitors come to know the ledger art tradition. Understanding the historical antecedents and the contemporary expressions of the narrative art tradition is necessary in order to fully appreciate the material-rhetorical presence of the ledger art featured later in the structure of the exhibit. To continue that thematic set-up, the toy tipis are set up present to past. A mixed-media miniature tent by James Yellowhawk is situated next to Lakota model tipi, likely a toy for a child. In the accompanying description, Yellowhawk notes, "I had this idea that it would be really nice to carry something from the old again to the new...to take designs from an old tipi and put them on a new contemporary tent." The toy and the model once again deliberately set past and present into conversation with one another, yet here it is slightly different: the narrative is three-dimensional. In the circle of the room, a visitor must consciously walk around it as it disrupts the flow from the hides to the muslin dresses at the transition to the ledger art form. In a sense, the

contemporary tent model— with its depiction of a night sky and a buffalo hunt— is another *continuing*, another innovation in the expressive formation of Native visual expression.

Perhaps the most impactful of the conversations between past and present are the dresses, both of which honor relatives. To the right, a crisp and vibrant dress tells of the artist's grandfather— his service in the United States military, his name and his stories. The colors are stark against the white background, covered by a protective layer of glass as the dress is tacked to a tilted display. Next to Lauren Good Day Giago's 2015 dress is a Hunkpapa Lakota dress from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is noted that the dress was only worn by women "whose relative had been killed in battle." The dress depicts battles with the Arikara, denoted by hairstyles and clothing. On the left side of the historic dress is an image of a woman, noted to be Ini'laon'win, or Silent Woman. It is noted in the accompanying description that she is wearing a similar dress in the image, mourning the loss of her brother in battle with the Crow. The two dresses *do* something even more than *continue*; they connect. Certainly, they connect past and present as the rest of the room does, but they also connect with the audience in a way that perhaps others might not. Both dresses are incredibly personal. The accompanying description is entitled "Honor Relatives," describing the importance of Giago's grandfather in her life through the words of the artist herself: "My grandfather was a real culture bearer, and he made a big impact on my life." The symbols are explained within the description: "Around the bottom portion of the dress are stories that relate to Blue Bird's time in Vietnam. Before he deployed, Chief Drags Wolf presented him with an eagle plume for protection. He kept it on his helmet, but in a battle, he lost both the helmet and the plume." The description placard further notes to the audience to look for an "interactive touchscreen elsewhere in this exhibition to learn more about Blue Bird's story."



Christopher Green, in a review of the exhibit for *The Brooklyn Rail*, described *Unbound* as “replac[ing] the standard museological linearity of historical progress with a cyclical return, emphasizing the lived connection with tradition and the past that Plains narrative artists embody today.” The narrative art tradition, and thereby ledger art as well, is framed as recurring, connecting, and continuing. Within the exhibit space, this continuum of tradition moves against the colonial value systems of standard museum practice. Even while the exhibit remains “epistemologically obedient” to the Western museum practice of denoting the date, origin, and name of the object exhibited, there is decolonizing action in the materials as they are situated alongside each other, as they are placed into dialogue and conversation, as they act together (Cushman, “Wampum,” 119). While dates along a Western notion of linear time are still provided along with the exhibited materials, it is the objects themselves that carry the stories around and through. This movement from past to present and from present to past both functions within and yet works outside of the conventions of Western modernity and colonial museum practice. It is in this movement between linearity and cyclic notions of temporality that decolonial conversations take place. The materials and the narratives—from aged hide to pristine muslin—note their place in the continuing tradition just as easily as the years noted on the accompanying placards. When asking the question posed by Blair, *What does the text do to (or with, or against) other texts?*, one must certainly be aware of the multiple layers of linkages, relationships, and rhetoricity that may be present in any given space at any given time. As mentioned in Chapter Two, the question is nearly unmanageable in its breadth and depth. “From Past to Present” is a network of various linkages, between the diverse examples of the narrative art tradition to the descriptions and legends, to the works themselves in how they might affect the audience.

## **Modes, Possibilities, and Reproduction: Applications and Digital Presence**

If a visitor turns to the left after entering from the rotunda, they enter the “Warrior Art” section of the exhibit. Like “From Past to Present,” this section of the exhibit is essential in contextualizing and framing the ledger art and narrative art within the “Contemporary Expressions” section. Around the room, illustrated muslins, elkhide robes, and decorated shirts speak of horse raids, rescues, battles, and personal experiences. It is between this section and the “From Past to Present” section that ledger art first appears, on a wall panel that is situated between the two rooms, facing the rest of the contemporary narrative art. The ledger art featured in this panel is, however, firmly situated in all supporting materials as part of the “Warrior Art” section. The panel at the transition point of the section summarizes the form’s content and trajectory in materiality:

Male warrior-artists traditionally painted tipis, buffalo robes, and shirts with scenes of accomplishments such as taking horses, killing enemies, or rescuing wounded comrades. These depictions served as public reminders and as validation. In the 1800s, as the buffalo were decimated, artists increasingly used cloth rather than hide.

Paper also became widely available through drawing and ledger books. Warrior-artists used the new media to provide intricate chronicles of their own and others' exploits. Often created with factory-made pens, pencils, brushes, ink, crayons, and watercolor, such drawings provided a means of cultural continuity during the early years of the reservation era (1870–1920).

With its outlined profiles and flat color, narrative imagery employs a stylized shorthand. For example, black coats and flat-topped hats often indicate white people. Hair and clothing styles distinguish tribal identities, while name glyphs and personal effects identify individuals. Illustrations show battle participants, detail weaponry, and specify who killed, captured, or wounded the enemy. Artists also drew hunting, courting, and ceremonial events.

Though certainly the muslins and hides of the main “Warrior Art” room are important in their presence, I will focus discussion here on the ledger books featured on a transitional wall between

the “From Past to Present” and “Warrior Art” sections, their relationship to the hides and muslins near them, and the modes by which they are reproduced, preserved, and mediated.

Paper as a medium for the Plains narrative art form— following the progression from the rotunda to the *Infinity of Nations* entrance— makes its first appearance in the exhibit with the “Art from Fort Marion” display. As some of the most widely known and studied works, the Fort Marion ledgers act as a cornerstone for the study of ledger art. Though not the earliest examples of ledger art, the Fort Marion ledgers are by far the best-known. In fact, the Fort Marion ledgers are often referenced as inspiration for contemporary artist, such as Dolores Purdy Corcoran, whose work is held at the Kansas Historical Society Archives. Various ledger books were drawn by seventy-two Plains warriors from the Cheyenne, Arapaho, and Kiowa tribes who were held as prisoners of war at Fort Marion in Saint Augustine, Florida. Two such books are displayed in the exhibit. The creation of these ledger books is described by the textual description accompanying them:

Officials encouraged the prisoners to produce objects for the tourist trade, providing them with drawing paper, pencils, ink, crayons, and paint. Many of the warriors responded with illustrations of pre-reservation life on the plains as well as their new experiences of incarceration. Much of their work is now in museum collections, and their style is often emulated by contemporary ledger artists.

The two notebooks are under glass, opened to a particular page. The first book, on the left, is opened to an image described as the speaking of Bishop Whipple. Bear’s Heart (Southern Cheyenne), the artist, is noted to have spent three years in the prison at Fort Marion before attending Hampton Normal Agricultural Institute in Virginia. Above the book, a sepia image of the captured men— uniformed and hair cut— shows the artist and the others who were held at Fort Marion as prisoners of war. Both the photograph and the ledger page show the imprisoned men in uniforms and straight, regimented lines.

The Bear's Heart ledger is accompanied by another ledger book, the Zotom ledger. This ledger is widely referenced in the history of ledger art. Zotom is pictured among other men above the open notebook as it lies open under the glass. The ledger notebook image is described as "Colonel Benjamin H. Grierson meeting a Kiowa chief [...] The first commander of the U.S. Army's Tenth Cavalry, Grierson was committed to peaceful relations with southern Plains nations but was instrumental in enforcing reservation-era policies." There is a distinct and telling relationship between these ledger notebooks and the notebooks held at the Kansas Historical Society archive, a relationship which extends far beyond the glass cases and boxes in which the notebooks are held. In each case, the experiences of Plains prisoners of war are reproduced and remediated. Whether originating from the first-hand experiences of Bear's Heart or Zotom at Fort Marion in Florida, or the experiences of Wild Hog and the other Northern Cheyenne men at the Dodge City jail in Kansas, the images they rendered tell of survival and sovereignty. Whether created for tourists, to pass the time, or to articulate sovereign Native expression, the ledgers are nonetheless in motion.

Next to each of these influential ledgers is a digital screen, as seen in Figure 3.4. If a visitor taps the screen, the digital ledger will flip to the next page of the ledger notebook to the right of it. This allows visitors to see the collective images of the ledger notebooks without risking damage to the notebook pages. While the notebooks remain within their protective glass cases, visitors can nonetheless traverse through the narratives collected within them. This digital mediation brings to mind a question posed by Blair in her heuristic regarding material rhetorics: *What are the text's modes or possibilities of reproduction or preservation?* Blair notes "it seems uncontroversial to suggest that a text and its reproduction constitute different objects or events, yet it is relatively rare that we *practice* a distinction between original and copy, or among

different kinds of copies” (transcriptions, translations, etc.) (38, emphasis hers). Each iteration and modes of the Fort Marion ledger books presents a variance of the rhetoric of the ledger art itself. From the touchscreens by which visitors may ‘flip’ through the ledger book to the books that lay open beneath glass, the ledger art images do not change, but the ways in which they are engaged, perceived, and enacted *do* vary depending on the medium by which they are conveyed. By this same token, each image in this project, including Figure 3.4, presents a different intervention in the materiality of the text. As Carole Blair notes in her consideration of memorial sites, the photographs that accompany a written description and analysis do not “replicate the experience,” but rather act “two-dimensionalize and freeze an experience of three dimensions and movement” (38). In this case, the dimensions—these various possibilities of manifestation and mediation—do change throughout these modes and reproductions. The notebooks behind glass and the digital screens are each deeply rhetorical.

The digital reproduction of the ledger notebooks is an intervention in the materiality of the notebooks. Unlike my fingers on the page in the archive, the digital pages are differently tactile. Of course, it goes without saying that pressing a finger to a screen display, watching the page turn, and looking at the pixels of light that construct the ledger art image is a wholly different experience from the physical turning of a page, the grit of the paper, or press of lines in the page. The argument here is not to make a value judgement on the digital presence, but rather to note and acknowledge the various material rhetoricities that are present and the way those rhetoricities affect each other. This digital mediation of the notebooks is a mode of preservation, protecting the notebooks from wear and vandalism. Yet, this digital mediation *does* change the text and the experience of that text. In a sense, the digital text becomes a completely different manifestation of the narrative presence of the ledgers. This digital-textual reproduction cannot

replicate the physicality or materiality of the ledger art, but it does provide another completely separate yet equally rhetorical form of engagement for the audience. Does that remediation remove the ledger drawing from the overall transmotion or transrhetoricity of the ledger art tradition? No, it does not, but it does change the embodied sense of physical presence in the material-rhetorical presence of the ledger book itself. The ledger art's transmotive and transrhetorical<sup>24</sup> presence persists, taking on a different, equally vital form with this digital remediation.

In Chapter Two, I noted the material experience of the notebooks—how handling the notebooks affected the way the texts were perceived, how the continued presence of fingerprints and the erased lines and spattered watercolor affected the rhetoric of the drawings. It would seem natural to conclude that the rhetorical embodiment of these digitized drawings by Bear's Heart and Zotom wholly divorces the ledger books from this kind of tactile and material relation. While acknowledging and valuing the movement of the drawings across the material and digital modes, it must also be noted that though the material experience and presence of the drawings is different, it is no less rhetorical. I return here to the image of fingerprints in the ink. Though there are no fingerprints that I saw on the pages beneath the glass, there are fingerprints on the digital screen, left by visitors as they moved through the Zotom's images. It is a different presence, yes, but there is still motion and movement—between the images projected onto the screen and the physical screen itself as it mediates the interaction for the audience. Likewise, there is movement between the screens and the ledgers that are situated beside them.

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<sup>24</sup> The term “transmotive” refers here to Gerald Vizenor's idea of “transmotion” referenced in Chapter Two. Transmotion is defined by Vizenor as “survivance, a reciprocal use of nature, not a monotheistic, territorial sovereignty. Native stories of survivance are the creases of transmotion and sovereignty” (*Fugitive Poses*, 15). Rachel Jackson's conception of “transrhetoricity” observes how rhetoric moves across and between spaces, places, temporalities, localities, communities, individuals, and cultures.

This is to say: the digital pages on which the narrative images of Zotom and Bear's Heart are inscribed in pixels of fine light are not at all removed from the transmotion of the ledger art form. As with each material manifestation of the narrative art tradition seen in the museum exhibit— from the hides to the dresses to ledger books to the digital mediations—there is a connection between each that supersedes two and three dimensions. As noted in Chapter Two, there is a transmotion in the ledger art and this transmotion links the drawings to an “intangible presence.” This intangible presence is seen in the horses that run across the page or hide or shields onto which they are etched or painted. In this, the images are active— they exist in the spaces between ledger pages, from one narrative to the next, between the color and the paper. Denise Low-Weso argues that this ‘presence’ is “the body of tradition that, in the ledger texts, interacts with images-texts” (85). The ledger books and the digital mediations that accompany them further makes clear the link between Vizenor's concept of transmotion and transrhetoricity. In this, the transrhetoricity of the ledger art is not necessarily place-based, as is discussed in Chapter Two, but also modal and material. Before, I described the motion of the ledger art as traveling, moving, changing. Here, two manifestations of that motion sit side-by-side, each moving, acting, and being acted upon in different ways for different ends. While they are transmotive as both connect to an ‘intangible presence’ existing between them, they are also transrhetorical as the rhetoric of the drawings moves across the two modes. Whether pixels or paper, the ledger drawings are still able to affect a narrative, still carrying the weight of the men who drew them in the cells at Fort Marion.

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*When we entered the Contemporary Expressions section, we squeezed into a small side hallway with about six other people. In the cramped corridor, we were introduced to the bright*

*colors and humor of Dwayne Wilcox. His words on the placard accompanying his pieces strikes me as a transition from the war dresses on the other side of the wall, the warrior art, and the ledger drawings of Fort Marion.*

*“In the 1800s our ancestors did what they had to do to preserve things for us,” he says. “They very eloquently covered everything from that period. They don’t need my help with that. Our lives are just as important as our ancestor’s lives.” The cellphones, intertribal dances, lawn chairs of Wilcox’s work are situated across from the work of Norman Frank Sheridan Sr., which draws on traditional themes of courting, war parties, and symbolic imagery.*

*They’re juxtaposed, but not in argument.*

*“You almost feel like they’re talking to each other,” I overhear a man say in the hallway.*

*Both artists use bright colors to explore their own perspectives on the tradition and bring them into the present through their own means.*

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## **Relational Space: Building Connections, Taking Action**

Throughout the “Contemporary Expressions” section of the *Unbound* exhibit, visitors are introduced to the work of fifteen contemporary Native artists and their interpretations of the narrative art tradition. Most of these interpretations are through modern works of ledger art that are situated along the beige walls of the exhibit. The sixteen contemporary artists featured in this section of the exhibit represent various different approaches to the form, exploring diverse perspectives on Native identity, tradition, and contemporary Native life. In no particular order, the artists are: Dwayne Wilcox (Oglala Lakota), Dallin Maybee (Northern Arapaho/Seneca), Terrance Guardipee (Blackfeet), Ronald Burgess (Comanche), Sherman Chaddlesone (Kiowa),



David Dragonfly (Blackfeet/Assiniboine), Lauren Good Day Giago (Arikara/Hidatsa/Blackfeet/Plains Cree), Darryl Growing Thunder (Assiniboine/ Sioux), Juanita Growing Thunder-Fogarty (Assiniboine/ Sioux), Vanessa Jennings (Kiowa/ Pima), Chester Medicine Crow (Apsáalooke [Crow]), Chris Pappan (Osage/ Kaw/ Cheyenne River Lakota), Joel Pulliam (Oglala Lakota), Martin E. Red Bear (Oglala/ Sicangu Lakota), Norman Frank Sheridan (Southern Cheyenne/ Arapaho) and Jim Yellowhawk (Cheyenne River Lakota). As the exhibit transitions from past to present, the work of these contemporary artists is framed as personal interpretations of the tradition. From the ledger art to the three-dimensional items that also invoke the narrative art form, what emerges in the Contemporary Expression section of the exhibit is a celebration of voice, identity, culture, and tradition.

The “Contemporary Expressions” section is framed by the same description at either end, which historically contextualizes the work of the featured artists. The description speaks to the changes that occurred during the reservation era, the influence of boarding schools on the expression of Native people, and the resurgence of the form around the 1960s with the establishment of the Institute of American Indian Arts (IAIA) and, though not specifically mentioned, the American Indian Movement. The full description is provided below:

During the reservation era (1870–1920) the focus of Plains narrative drawings began to change. Many of the drawings had been created for Native viewers, but non-Natives increasingly were interested in purchasing them. Accordingly artists less frequently illustrated battles against white adversaries. Instead they depicted scenes of buffalo hunts, courtship, and family life. Around the turn of the twentieth century, many artists entered boarding schools and were introduced to Western-oriented styles. As a result, the production of narrative art declined.

The 1960s saw a resurgence of Native-led art. The establishment in 1962 of the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe encouraged new expressions informed and inspired by cultural traditions. Ledger art flourished and was widely collected in the 1960s and 1970s.

Today both men and women artists draw upon their cultural traditions, personal experiences, and artistic sensibilities as they continue to shape the Plains narrative style. In 2012 the National Museum of the American Indian commissioned new works from eleven prominent narrative artists. Artists were selected from Native nations that traditionally practiced pictorial storytelling. With no limits on theme or approach, each artist created works that embody his or her distinctive style and voice.

The description very clearly notes the presence of female artists in what was once considered a traditionally male art form. The mix of approaches, the emphasis on personal expression and identity, and the descriptions' careful note of "no limits" on theme or approach guide the visitor to consider each artist both individually and yet within the broader scope of the tradition. How the artists might "embody his or her distinctive style and voice" leaves open the possibility for a wide range of narrative art expressions, making this section the broadest in scope. The "Contemporary Expressions" section moves from male to female, young to old, honoring the past and living the present, showcasing the various ways by which artists communicate their stories through this tradition and thereby challenging what ledger art is, how it is enacted, to what it does.

Unlike the other sections, which are open— without any displays in the center part of the room—the three rooms which house the contemporary artwork host several displays at the center of the spaces, for visitors to walk around as they move from one ledger artist to the next. Often, these display cases house different modes of pictographic expression that directly relate to or converse with the ledger art featured on the walls around them. One example of this would be a 1900 quilled and beaded parasol situated within a display case across from a ledger art piece by Joel Pulliam featuring a black and blue parasol. The two seem to speak to each other, not just in a sense of shared theme, but between the hide of the parasol and the paper, the quills and the lines of color, and the lace-trimmed edge of the parasol and the lines of cursive English beneath

Pulliam's painted parasol. They act on each other while also acting on the visitors that move through the exhibit, redirecting their attentions and movements as they consider the ledger art and narrative art form. Each display case is integral to the exhibit and the ledger art within the exhibit. From directing the flow of persons to articulating relations to showcasing diverse expressions, the art featured in the display cases is equally as important and influential as the ledger art that lines the walls of the three rooms in the "Contemporary Expressions" section.

While there is no prescribed pathway by which visitors should or should not traverse the exhibit, the art in the display cases act upon both the visitors and the ledger art by which they are situated. How these texts act on people is through both relationships and presence. Carole Blair notes, "Rhetoric of all kinds acts on the whole person— body as well as mind— and often on the person situated in a community of other persons. There are particular physical actions the text demands of us: ways it inserts itself into our attention and ways of encouraging or discouraging us to act or move, as well as think, in particular directions" (46). Just by mere existence, the text opens itself for interpretation, connection, and negotiation. Blair notes that one such way that memorials act on visitors and audiences is through the travel and traverse of visitors to and through a memorial site. The action of going to a site and making way through particular pathways at the site is rhetorical in that the site determines the way it is read through the mapping of the space. In a similar sense, the NMAI determines the flow of people in each of the rooms of "Contemporary Expressions" by creating these glass-encased pauses, each containing either a contextualizing historical piece or a contemporary alternative expression of the narrative art form. As Barbara Dickinson et al note, museums engage visitors not only on a symbolic level through the practices of collection, exhibition, and display, but also on a material level by locating visitors' bodies in particular spaces" (29). Whether moving from either entrance, visitors

must circle the “Contemporary Expressions” rooms in order to see the ledger art, thereby also circling the centralized objects in the display cases.

Though I will not discuss each of these display cases and the items within them, I will instead discuss two different examples and the way they act on people, then as a conclusion to this section, I will discuss how the contemporary ledger art of the exhibit acts on visitors as they encounter it. The first of the two examples I will discuss is a historical piece that is situated in front of the work of Terrance Guardipee—a Blackfoot headdress from 1890. This is part of a sequence of three display cases within a single room. The headdress is encased in glass, situated on a pole that allows the ermine skins to trail downward to brush the display’s floor. The description notes:

Upright headdresses like this one are typical of the Blackfoot style. Such headdresses are regarded as sacred, and the right to wear one must be earned and transferred in a ceremony. The eagle plumes convey spiritual protection and power. The ermine skins represent the harnessed energy of these aggressive and feisty animals.

In many drawings Terrance Guardipee depicts a headdress transfer ceremony among women as well as war chiefs Mountain Chief and Running Eagle wearing similar headdresses.

Through the glass of the case, from this description, the work of Terrance Guardipee can be seen. It is almost as if one can see the ledger art through the lens of the past and through the lens of tradition. The headdress is seen both in three dimensions and in two-dimensional images that line the wall. Though not necessarily within the ‘narrative art’ tradition of the exhibit, the headdress contextualizes the ledger art to which it is related. The antique paper onto which the bright colors of Guardipee’s images are inscribed might even be from the same time period during which the headdress was transferred. For example, the most poignant connection to the centralized headdress is *Blackfeet Headdress Transfer*, a 2012 piece on antique ledger paper depicting the

transfer of a headdress from one generation to the next as two men sing and tell stories. They are relatives, in a sense—the headdress and the ledger art. They act upon each and act upon the visitors who visit the exhibit, guiding both their feet and their perceptions.

The second example is situated in an adjacent display. Entitled *Doll with Honor Dress*, the work is a modern example of a traditional toy made for children. Juanita Growing Thunder Fogarty created the doll with her brother, Darryl Growing Thunder. While Growing Thunder Fogarty beaded and did the quillwork for the doll; Growing Thunder drew the horses on the dress and sleeves of the doll. Growing Thunder's ledger art is featured on a wall nearby. From the muslin, hide, quills, beads, thimbles, and horse hair of the doll to the antique ledger paper and muslin, Growing Thunder's work challenges people to think about the various mediums by which narratives can be conveyed, the different ways the ledger art style can be enacted, and how traditions can be continued through these forms. In Darryl Growing Thunder's artist description, it is stated that his work "pay[s] tribute to his ancestors [...] as a means of cultural continuity and identity." This example of the display cases situated throughout the exhibit characterizes another relationship and another way that people are acted upon. Situated among historical items, the doll challenges the audience to consider the various ways that the narrative art form can be embodied, beyond paper, hides, and muslins. The quillwork and beads nod to the nearby parasol while horses run across the skirt and onto the walls. Rather than being contextual, the doll is a representation of the diverse ways narrative art has been enacted over the years. Visitors must consider this, along with other variances to the form, with each artist, piece, and item that is encountered. Ledger art—and thereby, narrative art—is no longer *just* art that is drawn into or onto ledgers, but rather part of a much larger historical and cultural nexus of connections.

Pinpointing exactly how the ledger art and narrative art *acts on people* is a difficult question to consider— as diverse as the individual visitors who move through the exhibit, changing with each new piece encountered. Each person is acted upon in different ways, physically, philosophically, and personally. One must consider in this the relationship between the museum-as-text and the narrative art texts held within the museum, how the two act together in making-meaning. In its nine month tenure at the NMAI-NY, the *Unbound* exhibit was potentially visited more than 400,000 times as described by the statistical numbers provided by the Smithsonian Institution. In this, the museum acted not only as a destination. It arranged histories, communicated stories, articulated presence, and gathered people around the images of past and present. More than this, as a public site, the museum brings people in, locates their bodies in front of framed ledger art pieces. The texts draw visitors from one framed image to the next, along the walls. The glass-encased objects make visitors walk around them as they are studied, affecting the people with their physical presence.

Yet there is more here. Dallin Maybee's work as it utilizes various materials and discusses a wide range of themes contrasts greatly with Chris Pappan's photorealistic approaches, yet each artist centers identity and tradition, sometimes working within tradition to challenge it. Lauren Good Day Giago's work centers the women in her community and her family, bringing to the forefront a female voice in a previously male-oriented form. Each artist's collection of work featured in the exhibit challenges "ledger art," what it was, what it is, and what it can be. People visiting the exhibit must also consider the narrative art tradition as recursive, as part of a continuum of Native expression, presence, and action. More than that, the texts invite identification, empathy, and a sort of nearness that is sorely limited in the bustling and distant streets of Manhattan. In many important ways, the narrative art and the museum act

together, with each other, to provide visitors with the information, vision, and stories necessary to understand a little better the ways of meaning-making that exist within Native communities, allowing visitors the opportunity to know the stories of the artists whose hands once drew the images they see.

*We stand in front of a kiosk in the Discovery Room, a brightly lit red-painted space that sits as a branch off of the main exhibit. It sits between past and present, the two historical sections and “Contemporary Expressions.” Along the far wall, the materials necessary for creating narrative art are displayed on a counter— paints and markers, ledger books and muslin. The materials of the past and present are situated next to each other. Near the door, a touchscreen media kiosk hold the pixelated image of Giago’s “A Warrior’s Story Honoring Grandfather Bluebird.” My mother and I press the screen and listened as Giago’s voice explained the meaning behind the images on the dress.*

*“Pawpaw would’ve had a pair of fire boots,” my mother comments as we finish reading through the panels. My grandfather was a firefighter. Mom is imagining what images would be on such a dress for him. “A firetruck. A white fire chief’s helmet.”*

*“A baseball,” I supply with a fond smile. Mom nods her agreement.*

*I wonder how many others had asked themselves the same question standing at the same kiosk over the course of the exhibit. It seemed, as we spoke about the possible images for my grandfather, that there is a deeper connection that we felt to Giago’s work. It made us think of our own family, our own images, and how we might honor them and their memory.*

*I realized that part of that honoring would be in remembering them as I wrote my dissertation. Remembering that I remembered them in that instance.*

*This, in its own way, is like a dress. At least, I hope it is.*

## Conclusion: Conversations

Narrative art, and the ledger art within that heritage, is a manifestation of Native rhetorical sovereignty. That is, as Scott Lyons defines it: “the inherent right and ability of peoples to determine their own communicative needs and desires in this pursuit, to decide for themselves the goals, modes, styles, and languages of public discourse” (449). It is a connection between rhetorical sovereignty, action, and trans-rhetoricity/motion that culminates the *significance* of the exhibit and the ledger art held within it. Visitors come to understand that Native expression is diverse, far-reaching, and innovative, while linked to long-standing traditions. The exhibit, through its articulation of Native rhetorical sovereignty, engages people in a way that might inspire visitors to support Native sovereignty and social action. To return to where we began, I look to Dallin Maybee’s work *Conductors of Our Own Destiny*— the large hide displayed at the *Infinity of Nations* entrance. In the description of this work, Maybee describes his works in terms of sovereignty: “a manifestation that many tribes today, and many individuals are using their inherent sovereignty to strengthen themselves, strengthen their cultural identity, who they are [...] as well as that strength that has always been there to take often very horrific experiences and turn them into something we can own, and then guide us into the future.” The significance of the exhibit is one of individual and cultural identity as it is mediated and articulated through visual and material forms.

In Chapter Two, I demonstrated that the relationship between the ledger art and the archive was essential to understanding the meaning and moment of the ledger drawings’ rhetoricity within that space. The relationships between the landscape, the building, the people, and the drawings themselves is the significance: a significance of *relationships*. Such connections are clearly present in the *Unbound* exhibit as some aspects of its rhetoricity works



against its name. Emil Her Many Horses, in an interview with *Smithsonian Magazine*, explains: “The title, ‘Unbound,’ means that it’s more than paper.” Though the use of “unbound” in the title of the exhibit largely references the dynamic nature of the narrative art tradition, the *Unbound* name likewise speaks to that same tradition being tied to Western temporal understandings of time, modernity, and specific notions of identity. An example of this is the Museum of Modern Art’s exhibition featuring ledger art along linear chronology with little representation given to contemporary arts. The works within the exhibit are not *unbound* entirely however, but instead, I argue, incredibly connected to each other—bound, even as they are together, unbound. The connections between the ledger art, as well as the other various forms of narrative art represented within the exhibit, are ultimately what illustrate the *unbound* nature of the tradition.

That is the significance of the narrative art, a significance of conversation accomplished through linking past to present, tradition to innovation, and creator to audience. Certainly, as mentioned in Chapter Two, these relationships are articulated through the simultaneous presence of various individual material-rhetorical texts in one space. The significance of these relationships goes without saying and is evidenced by earlier discussion in this chapter. I instead intend to focus this final section on a specific element of the museum, the exhibit, the narrative art, and the ledger drawings’ rhetoricity and the relationships that live within it. That discussion necessitates further consideration of Blair’s fifth question: *How does the text act on people?* This will then further link to the overall question of *What is the significance of the text’s material existence?*

After careful observation of the exhibit and the ledger drawings displayed, after walking through with my mother, and thinking on the ways in which the works in the exhibit acted upon me, upon us, I arrived to a thought. Carole Blair’s heuristic speaks to linkages between texts and

how those text act on people, but a decolonizing question might be added to Blair's heuristic: *How does the text inspire people to action(s)?* Rather than *implying* that one element of how a text acts on people is through bringing them to understandings that facilitate social actions, this question instead is more specific and pointed. It gives the people who are in contact with the material rhetorics agency and ability. In one example of this found within the exhibit, the Discovery Room is such a space that might inspire people to action. The Discovery Room supplies displays of materials often used in the creation of ledger and narrative art, past and present. Hanging from the counter are bits of deer hide and muslin for visitors to touch, and along the wall are clusters of themes and elements of ledger art. It makes the narratives more accessible, to be clearly articulated through paper, markers, and human creativity. These are the instruments of Native rhetorical sovereignty, used in such a variety of ways that the works seem to be even more individualized in the main exhibit. As they are displayed together in the themed clusters along the wall, the shared thematic elements and varied styles emphasize the individuality of Native identity, the inherent sovereignty that is articulated with each manifestation, and the ways in which the ledger art is called into being. The Discovery Room holds a different sense of "discovery" than the colonial Columbus and Verrazano painted in the rotunda outside of the exhibit. Instead, in this space, "discovery" is spun positively— as engaging or interacting with the narrative art tradition through media and hands-on, giving visitors the sense of affecting the narrative. The tools as they sit on the counter, the materials that a visitor can feel, they each support the rhetorical sovereignty of Native expression, and further inspire others to support that sovereignty by creating spaces, opening doors, and provoking new thoughts.

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*Telling Stories. Describing. Identity. Horses.*

*Stories. Flat. Colors. Buffalo. Battle. Name Glyphs.*

*Ceremony.*

*These words are painted on the wall of the Discovery Room, but it is ceremony that catches my attention. I watch as my mother walks out of the room to stand in front of Giago's section. She's looking at a depiction of a group of women making and creating. While she does so, I look back to the word "ceremony." I can almost feel the grit of paper on my fingertips as I pull my hand away from the digital screen where Giago's work is featured. I turn and follow my mother into the hall filled with ledger art.*

*"I was trying to think of something we make together." My mother gestures toward a gathering of women on the ledger art. "She was talking about crafts, but...Making? We cook, don't we? That'd be it for our family. Cooking. We're not crafty people."*

*Before, in the archive, I wondered if the grit on my fingertips was a ceremony. It may have been. I think more and more that it was. For a moment in the museum, I also wondered if my fingers on the digital screen might be a ceremony as well. Shawn Wilson says that the purpose of any ceremony is to build stronger relationships to "bridge the distance between the cosmos and us." I rest my hand on my mother's shoulder. I still wasn't so sure about the cosmos, but— "Thank you for coming with me, for the support. You didn't have to. It means a lot."*

*"You're welcome," she nods. "I've learned a lot, too."*

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There is more to see. There is more to be said. There is more to hear. There are more conversations present in this space, in the exhibit, more voices to be heard. Voices that move beyond the images and likewise come from the images. Those conversations move beyond the

paper, muslin, and hide, beyond the walls of the archive, and beyond the walls of the exhibit—  
*unbound.*

## CHAPTER FOUR

### **Drawing the Lines Between: Exhibited Ledger Art and Artist Voices in Conversation**

*“Are you going to talk to ledger artists?”*

*I am sitting in the Indigenous Rhetorics workshop at the Rhetoric Society of America Institute. It’s Day 2, bright and early in the morning. Each participant in the workshop brought portions of current projects to share. I brought along what would ultimately become my dissertation project. At that time is in its first incarnation: exploring the ledger art associated with the Keystone XL and water protector movements. It was well-before I knew of the— at that time, upcoming—Unbound exhibit. Still, I ask for the input on the fledgling idea of looking at the rhetoricity of ledger art.*

*“A goal here may be to see how artists perceive the rhetoricity and materiality of ledger art.”*

*“Yeah, I mean, do artists seek out particular material items to use in their art? How much is the art and the material in concert with one another? Are they responding to anything?”*

*I am furiously taking notes, scribbling them down as quickly as possible. “Feature artists in the project...” I say it aloud as I write it down, thinking further on how I might accomplish this. Cold-calling or cold-emailing didn’t seem quite natural. I am admittedly terrible at both.*

*“Their voices are important, just as important as the art itself. How do they frame their art? Their Native identity? What connections do they make? It’d be interesting to see what different artists say.” There’s a heavy silence as we think more on that statement. “Regardless, the artists themselves are important. You need to include them as you make meaning here.”*

*“Draw some lines from different artists, what they share and what they don’t. Their individual takes on the form are valuable to how rhetoricity might be considered here: are they thinking in terms of visual rhetoric? Are they thinking in terms of material rhetoric? Both? You’re gonna have to play with this more, perhaps find a way to connect to more ledger artists.”*

*Some months later, I attended the Curator’s Talk before the opening of the National Museum of the American Indian in New York’s Unbound: Narrative Art of the Plains exhibit. It was in attending that event that I knew what artists I needed to speak with: the ones who were present and in the same space as me.*

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## **Introduction: Voices in Conversation**

The “Curator’s Talk” presentation took place during the evening of March 12, 2016, held in the museum’s Diker Pavilion for Native Arts and Cultures, a presentation space in the lower part of the US Custom House building. At this talk, the exhibition curator, Emil Her Many Horses (Oglala Lakota), described the creation, development, and implementation of the *Unbound* exhibit through situating the narrative art form within the broader context of Native history, introducing the historical antecedents to the more widely-known ledger art form, and familiarizing the audience with the diverse ways the narrative art tradition is contemporarily called into being. To centralize artist voices, Her Many Horses featured three Native artists who spoke about their respective work, their individual interpretations of narrative art, and their summarized beliefs regarding the work that they do. After their individual presentations, the featured artists in attendance (Chris Pappan, Dallin Maybee, and Lauren Good Day Giago) participated in a meet-and-greet held within the main exhibition gallery. This meet-and-greet was the first time the exhibit was opened to a public audience. The artists and Her Many Horses, as

well as the visitors, experienced the exhibit's first viewing together. It was following this Curator's Talk and Meet-and-Greet that I decided to speak to the artists that were present that evening, to get their perspectives on the materiality of ledger art and the exhibit. I consider the fact that we were together in that exhibit at the same time as the link that connects me and them, just as the relationships among texts that exist within the same space.

In previous chapters, I have discussed the material-rhetorical conversations that take place within the archive and the museum. The motion and presence of the ledger art speaks to the interconnectedness of the narratives as crossing temporal and physical boundaries, sketching lines between spaces as a continuing narrative of Native identity and sovereignty is drawn. Within the archive, the voices of the artists are muffled by colonial ideas of categorization and folders. Though contemporary artist, Dolores Purdy Corcoran's work is featured on the Kansas Historical Society website with its own article, the information provided within that article is framed along a colonial matrix, centralizing the State of Kansas rather than indigenous identity. Though certainly one can continue to hear the voices of the men who created the old ledger drawings in the archive through the continued presence and articulation of their images, their voices are framed through categorization and description that may effectively silence or quieten those voices. (It should be further noted that Dolores Purdy Corcoran's influence is also present in the NMAI as her work is sold in the museum gift shop. Though her work was not featured in the *Unbound* exhibit, her work's presence in the gift shop illustrates another in many connections between the KSHS archive and the museum.) Unlike the archive, the museum actively centered artists' voice. Throughout the exhibit space, the voices of the artists can be heard—from the descriptions that accompany the works and through multimedia within the exhibit. A majority of the accompanying descriptions within the exhibit featured quotes directly from the artists

themselves. The perspectives of the artists was so important in the framing of this exhibit that the final line in the description of the “Contemporary Expressions” section states: “With no limits on theme or approach, each artist created works that embody his or her distinctive style and voice.”

Yet, even with this active centering of artist voice, there is something very distinctive that comes from actual conversation—a dialogue between two people, rather than the quoted words of artists within the metadiscourse of the museum. In previous chapters, I have referenced the idea of *conversation* in a variety of ways. It has been used to speak to the relationship and exchanges that take place between materials, texts, presences, modes, and systems. In the archive, *conversation* was between the ledger art, the tissue paper, the accompanying information sheets, the limestone walls, the people, and me. Such held true in the museum, where the narrative art of the exhibit spoke to the frescoes in the rotunda, to each other, to audiences, as well as to the ledger art of the Kansas Historical Society some thousands of miles away and across temporalities. I further illustrated that the *conversation* extended to my mother and me as we moved through the exhibit. Throughout the previous chapters, dialogue has been observed and is taking place—materially, figuratively, and symbolically. The very act of reading this is a conversation, an exchange of meaning and of making-meaning. In a way, we are speaking to each other, you and me. Yet, so far, our conversation has been largely framed in terms of the material-rhetorical, physical presence, of space and place. These considerations of conversation are important and they feature heavily in this chapter, but further meaning can be inferred in these observations of shared and dialogic presences.

This chapter will consider voices of the artists represented in the *Unbound: Narrative Art of the Plains* exhibit in two distinct ways: (1) through the presence of artist voices in the metadiscourse of the exhibit as heard in descriptions and multimedia situated within the exhibit



space; and (2) through direct dialogue with two contemporary artists featured in the exhibit. Though much work has been done in museum studies regarding the incorporation of artist and community voice through multimedia and other methods (King; Lonetree), this chapter does not look to make an argument regarding such practice. Rather, this project seeks to observe both how the presence of artist voices (as incorporated into the exhibit through quotes used in descriptions and voice recordings integrated into multimedia installations) affects the material rhetorics of that space. Further, this chapter will consider how the artists themselves perceive the material rhetorics of the exhibit, their work, and how conversation with the ledger artists subsequently affects the overall significance of the texts' rhetoricity. Following discussion of these two topics, I then construct a concept of a transrhetorical conversation space, which links together all of these various and diverse voices into one large dialogue. This discussion, like those in Chapters 2 and 3, uses Carole Blair's heuristic as guide for observing the voices integrated into the exhibit and as a springboard for questions asked during conversations with the two featured artists. At times, during this chapter, I will challenge or move away from this heuristic in order to accurately represent the voices of the artists. This will be further explained in a later section detailing the methods of the interviews. Once again, and for the final time, Blair's questions are:

1. What is the significance of the text's material existence?
2. What are the apparatuses and degrees of durability displayed by the text?
3. What are the text's modes or possibilities of reproduction or preservation?
4. What does the text do to (or with, or against) other texts?
5. How does the text act on people? (30-45)

To begin to address these questions, I will first observe and rhetorically analyze the exhibit's metadiscourse which incorporates artist voices as they are displayed in the *Unbound* exhibit. The exhibit descriptions, small placards that accompany the work of each artist, directly impact the rhetoric of the exhibit and the material rhetoric of the ledger art/narrative art held within that

space as they provide contextual information regarding the work. While various artists lend their voices to the exhibit through the descriptive placards that accompany their work, this project will focus specifically on the incorporation of the voices of Lauren Good Day Giago and Dwayne Wilcox as they are mediated within the exhibit. These observations will later be placed into discussion with the personal conversations I had with two other artists featured in the exhibit. The methodologies associated with those interviews will be discussed later in this chapter, following analysis of the exhibit's metadiscourse.

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*I could hear Dallin Maybee speaking as he stood in front of the hide at the Infinity of Nations entrance. There's an almost constant buzz of voices in the air, nearly fifty people perusing their way through the exhibit. My mother and I move through the exhibit and arrive to the back, where we stand in front of a piece that catches my attention. It's called "Identity Protection," and I take a quick picture of it. I didn't want to forget it. When I turn, my mother gestures to where Maybee is speaking with another visitor.*

*"You should go up and introduce yourself."*

*However, I never do. We make our way back through in the opposite direction, passing Chris Pappan as he also speaks with another visitor. My mother casts me a rueful look, but nonetheless gestures toward where he stands in front of his artist placard. "You should introduce yourself." I never do. I don't want to interrupt.*

*Lauren Good Day Giago is standing with her back to her paintings. She wears a ribbon skirt, just like the drawings that hang on the wall behind her. My mother says nothing this time, watching with me as visitors ask question after question.*

*There have been many times that I wish that I had introduced myself in person. Perhaps there will come a time when I will have the chance again.*

## **Descriptions, Artist Voice, and Speaking Back**

The descriptions within the *Unbound: Narrative Art of the Plains* exhibit were discussed in the previous chapter as they accompanied the narrative and ledger art featured in the gallery space. In Chapter Three, this discussion was often limited to the larger panels that established context for the exhibit sections. For example, there is an in-depth analysis of the narrative panels that can be found at either entrance of the exhibit space, which provide a brief summative history of narrative art. Such analysis was applied to each section panel. Chapter Three does at times delve into the individual descriptions that accompany specific works such as Martin Red Bear's Winter Count, the Long Soldier Winter Count, and Lauren Good Day Giago's "Dress to Honor Grandpa Blue Bird." These descriptions, as well as the occasional partnered *supplementing* and *supporting* legends, often approach the exhibit from the viewpoint of an observer, through the practical means of understanding the narratives that are mediated in the art. However, in the metadiscursive descriptions that incorporate quotes from the artist, the distance between the audience and the artist is shortened. An example of this in practice would be in the description found alongside Lauren Good Day Giago's "We Learn from Our Grandmothers":

Lauren Good Day Giago (Arikara/Hidatsa/Blackfeet/Plains Cree, b.1987)

The floral designs encircling the women echo decorative features on the traditional items they are making. Although Giago is depicting her own family, she says, "It could be any Native family. As women, and as Indian women, we learn and we teach."

Here, it is clear that Giago's voice is incorporated into the description through a direct quote. This incorporation of the artist's voice through exhibit descriptions is seen quite often in the *Unbound* exhibit, with many of the accompanying descriptions integrating direct quotes from the artists. Two significant questions arise with this active centering of Native artist voices within the exhibit. What do these descriptions do to (or with, or against) other texts in the exhibit? This, of course, connects to a very similar question in Blair's heuristic. And further, what is the significance of including the artist voices in the overall material rhetoricity of the ledger art within the exhibit? This section will focus particularly on two featured artists, Dwayne Wilcox and Lauren Good Day Giago, as examples of the incorporation of Native voice into the physical descriptions that accompanied pieces in the exhibit.

Including the perspectives of artists, the "voices" of the artists, is not necessarily a new enterprise in museum studies. For years, the words of artists have been incorporated into exhibits as a way of bridging the gap between the artist and audience (Bedford; Rand). Yet, often in exhibits and museums that showcase Native American work, objects, art, and made-things, Native voices are silenced through the centrality of Western ethnographical notes. This practice of framing Native objects shifts indigeneity to the background while foregrounding hegemonic anthropological observations. Like the archive, historically Native materialities are situated within Western colonial frames which erase the situation of the object's creation and its culturally-bound meaning. Likewise, Native voices are often silenced through the perpetuation of cultural ignorance and stereotypes: such as the static, single-dimensional catch-all representation of "Native America" or "Native American." Such static definitions place indigenous peoples in the past, in specific locations, and—by and large—as a singular dying culture. For example, in a write-up about the opening of the *Unbound* exhibit, the Metropolitan Museum's *The Plains*

*Indians: Artists of Earth and Sky* (2015) exhibit (originally organized in corporation with the Nelson-Atkins Museum in Kansas City, an interesting local connection) was referenced as a direct antithesis to the NMAI's *Unbound*. The Met's exhibit "was criticized for having no indigenous curators and decontextualizing the works as aesthetic rather than activated as living objects" (Green). Throughout *Unbound*, the works of various artists are framed as *alive* through the quoted voices of the artists, bringing the still images to life through contextualizing their artwork within lived experience and personal perceptions.

This can be seen in "Hand Game," a 2012 piece by Dwayne Wilcox, which hangs at the end of a narrow room just off of the main exhibit thoroughfare adjacent to the Fort Marion ledgers. It's a hallway-like room filled with brightly colored images. Visitors press their way between tradition and satire on either side. Wilcox's tongue-in-cheek humor is contrasted with Norman Frank Sheridan's modern takes on traditional images. Next to the work entitled "Hand Game," which can be seen in Figure 4.1, a small white placard describes the work:

Dwayne Wilcox (Oglala Lakota, b. 1954)

A hand game involves two bones or sticks, one with notches or marks. One team tries to guess the "hand" of the opposing team, which is hiding the notched bone. The game can be complicated, with hand signals, body language, and songs. "You can watch them for hours trying to figure it out," Wilcox says.

It reads as if Wilcox is speaking directly to the audience. There is perhaps even a fond laugh implied at the end. While the description provides the necessary contextual information for understanding the game, Wilcox's voice enters the conversation to make the connection more personal with the use of "you" and the added element of entertainment that the game would be so interesting as to watch for hours. My purpose in specifically pointing out the usage of this quote is not to decipher the linguistic impact of the words, but to consider how there is a material-rhetorical presence in these words.

Certainly, there is a kind of paradox in situating these two ways of making meaning next to each other. The alphabetical text of a colonial body is being used to communicate an Oglala Lakota perspective on a Native game, which is described through images that link to the historically image-based system of narrative mnemonics. On the one hand, there is a sort of *challenge* taking place as the two sign systems exist alongside each other. As seen in the archive, the white sheet of paper that situated the ledger notebooks into categories and tags was held within the same folder, creating a relationship based on their close proximity to one another. Here, the description placard is also in relation to the artwork. While it might be perceived as *challenging* through the alphabetic text, it can also largely be read as *contextualizing* or *supporting*. It both provides the necessary information for an audience to understand the images in the painting while also *supporting* the individual artist's voice and perspective. Not only this, such descriptions directly challenge the tendency of museums to place Native peoples in the past tense. *Wilcox says* is present tense. He says this now, directly to a contemporary audience. The Native artist, by this implementation of artist voice, is not of the past—where the voices of the artists can no longer be “heard”—but rather part of the present where “hand games” continue to be played for hours on end for the amusement of all.

This kind of incorporation of artist voice is used often in the exhibit with the artists speaking directly to the audience. In “Front Row Seats,” situated to the right of “Hand Games,” several women rest during a pow wow in folding lawn chairs. In the descriptive placard that is positioned next to the work, Wilcox “muses” that “it’s kind of odd, considering our ancestors used to just sit on the ground.” Having been to a pow wow myself, I can see the lawn chairs and the blankets that are laid out on the ground. Audiences with a particular set of experiences will be familiar with the image and the humor it holds. Those that are not familiar with the folding

chairs and blankets that stake out space at a pow wow might not quite understand the image, at which point Wilcox offers his experience. These small nods toward lived experience are conversational in their own way, framed as in discussion with the audience. This sort of tone is also established in two of the placards accompanying Lauren Good Day Giago's work in a room adjacent to the narrow corridor where the works of Wilcox and Sheridan are displayed. For example, in the description of a piece entitled "Independence Day Celebration," the piece is described as "based on historic photographs of Fourth of July celebrations on the Fort Berthold Reservation." Wilcox and Giago, as well as other artists whose voices are included in the exhibit through these quoted mediation, establishes a sort of exchange with the audience. In this, perhaps the artists let the audience into an experience or tell their stories in a way that is accessible for those viewing their works. Perhaps, it is yet another reminder of the humanity behind the drawings—a reminder of the individuals who create the drawings, the cultures they live within, and the communities to which they are connected.

One example of this can be seen in the integration of Giago's voice in the description for Giago's "Independence Day Celebration" (see Figure 4.2), an image in which five women stand in ribbon skirts/dresses. The description states: "'My people weren't allowed to do our traditional dances. They would allow us to come out, dance, and be together as a people on Independence Day,' Giago says." Again, rather than merely describing the piece in terms of aesthetics or ethnographic meaning (an example of which can be seen from the same description in the previous paragraph), the artist here is describing the significance of the image to her and her community, establishing a small part of a much larger and longer story. Shawn Wilson argues that "when listeners know where the storyteller is coming from and how the story fits into the storyteller's life, it makes the absorption of the knowledge that much easier" (32). By virtue of

its very name, narrative art tells a story, communicating individual and community experiences. When artists are allowed to make their stories clear for the “listeners,” or whatever audience comes to stand before their work, they are making known where they are coming from, where their work originates, and how it fits into their life. From that, visitors can absorb that knowledge from their respective experiences as well, taking from it what they will and doing with it. To reference Thomas King’s *The Truth about Stories*: “Take this story. It’s yours. Do with it what you will.” The mutivocality of the exhibit seems in a mode of storytelling, voices from all directions and in different modes and different times, different locations supporting and supplementing and continuing each other.

These direct quotes from the artists are significant in that they clearly establish *who* is speaking, giving agency to the artists through their active and present words. Through the clear inclusion of these voices, the exhibit avoids the museum tendency of being monovocal. That is, rather than merely providing anthropological notes on provenance and ethnographic notes on usage or meaning, the so-called “voice from nowhere” as referenced by Randy Bench, the exhibit tends toward the polyvocal. What is perhaps most noteworthy is the interaction between the voices of the narrative art within the exhibit and the voices of the artists as mediated through alphabetic texts. These descriptive panels are one way to “bridge the distance,” so to speak. Though non-Native visitors may not initially understand the way a “hand game” is played or the significance of Independence Day on the Fort Berthold Reservation, the accompanying descriptions allow the audience to understand just a bit better the meaning and motivation behind the drawn narratives as explained by the artists themselves. These incorporated quotes are not present for every piece in the exhibit, and in the case of the older pieces— such as those in the



“From Past to Present” and “Warrior Art” sections— it would appear that the voices of the artists are conspicuously absent.

Yet, they are not.

There are many voices in the *Unbound* exhibit. At times, they speak through direct quotes incorporated in piece descriptions. However, like the ledger drawings at the Kansas archive, each piece of narrative art within the exhibit *speaks back*<sup>25</sup>. From the muslins and hides, to the Fort Marion ledger books, to the contemporary expressions of the tradition, there are voices in the sweep of color on the page. They speak to each other, across lands and time. They continue. They communicate notions of identity, sovereignty, and survival. They speak back to the frescos in the rotunda. They challenge. They *speak back* to silences and articulate Native rhetorical sovereignty in lines, colors, and materials then and now. I echo here the same observations made at the KSHS archive: the images themselves articulate voices in ways that the alphabetic text situated alongside them cannot. However, the images and text—and likewise, the ledger art and the metadiscourse associated with it—should not be placed into opposition. A perceived opposition between the two texts as they are situated together negates their relationship, stops the motion carried from the placard to the artwork and from the artwork to the placard. There is conversation there, to reference the metaphor again. In fact, elaborated in full, there is a transrhetorical conversation that may be heard. In “Hand Games,” Native or non-Native, the audience watches the game take place in the ledger art. Perhaps, they even try to guess which figure in the piece has the object hidden in their hand. Is it the man on the end, to whom three

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<sup>25</sup>Here I must acknowledge the post-colonial concept of “writing back.” While this project does not intend to frame the ledger art or surrounding materialities as “writing back” in a sense of counter-discourses of resistance theory, I do acknowledge the work of those in post-colonial literature who have considered the ways various societies “write back” to colonial racism and oppression. This being said, “speaking back” is used here in a slightly different manner as I do not intend for the colonial structures to be the *only* silences that are being spoken to. Likewise, I see “speaking back” as linked to a sort of orality that “writing back” does not facilitate.

people are pointing? Are they just messing with him, pointing at him to distract those guessing? The audience may then look to the description again, to better understand the game. “*You can watch them for hours trying to figure it out,*” Wilcox says. So the audience turns back to the image once more.

This is transrhetorical as meaning is carried from mode to mode, across these two materialities as they mediate the hand game. In a sense, perhaps this is like the hand game itself. The meaning is hidden in either the image or the text, or shared across them. The voices of the contemporary artists— and their predecessors— in the exhibit are not simply limited to the written word, but instead are present through the images they create, the materials they use, the narratives they tell, and the press of color or graphite or paint on the paper. In the next section, which focuses on conversations that I had with two other artists featured in the exhibit, I consider the ways that the artists perceive the ledger (and narrative) art tradition, the role of materiality in the composition of their work, the ways that they see their work affecting people, and how they see the methods by which there is displayed affecting its overall meaning and message. In the conclusion of this chapter, I will then place this discussion of metadiscursive artist voice and the conversations with the artists alongside one another while also discussing the only aural voice present in the exhibit.

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*I am in my office at the Hall Center for the Humanities. There’s an almost constant growl biting at my window from the construction outside. On the wall I have tacked the ledger art I’d bought at the Haskell market years ago. Next to it, a drawing by Dolores Purdy Corcoran, purchased at the NMAI when I visited the Unbound exhibit.*

*I've come to the office early to prepare whatever materials I may need for my phone call later in the day. I would be speaking with Chris Pappan, an artist whose work I have come to admire since that day in the tent at Haskell. A few weeks later, I would speak with Dallin Maybee as well. I was more familiar with his beadwork before the exhibit. I was already in contact with Lauren Good Day Giago as well, working to schedule a time.*

*The growls and hisses outside are getting louder, and I worry that I'd made the wrong decision in my location for the phone call. I hadn't remembered the nearly constant construction at the back of the building, but there was no time to return to the quiet sanctuary of my apartment.*

*I pull up examples of Pappan's work. I make quick notes, small connections. I wondered if I should mention to him that a few of his works are in the archive on campus. I've asked to see the pieces, but the museum is under construction as well. (It seems everything is at the moment, including elements of my project.)*

*In the final minutes before the call, I pull up one of his pieces from the exhibit to have on screen while we spoke. It's called "Wahshunga Return." There's a man to the left, Wahshunga, a series of five hands with palms open, and interconnected lines in the background. I see the connections between these lines, like a constellation, but I don't know if that is his meaning.*

*A few weeks later, when speaking with Maybee, I follow the same practice. I arrive too early to my office, fret about the construction noises outside (and the additional roar of a lawnmower in the distance). I pull up an image from the exhibit, a bright figure on a white background with shadows casting ghosts onto the paper. It is one of my favorite pieces from the gallery.*

*I never do get to speak with Lauren. I hope to one day, when the timing works. I instead include her in a section discussing the presence of voices in the exhibit, as hers is the only aural voice present in the exhibit itself.*

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## **Artists in Conversation: Speaking with Chris Pappan and Dallin Maybee**

The artists that I interviewed for this chapter represent different perspectives on the ledger art tradition. Chris Pappan articulates his perspectives on Native identity through his graphite images that mix photorealism with distortion. Dallin Maybee's work incorporates bright colors and a diverse perspective on the possibilities of narrative art. Each holds opinions, views, and beliefs regarding the ledger art form that are individual to them and their lived experiences, just as unique as their particular artistic styles. Through understanding the way that these ledger artists first encountered ledger art, the ways that they "define" the form, how they understand the interactions between the materials and the images they create, as well as other aspects of their work and the ledger art tradition, a more thorough and important aspect of the material-rhetorical presence of ledger art in both the archive and the museum can be understood. The spaces become networked, in a way, with lines drawn between the archive in Topeka, the NMAI in New York, from an office in Lawrence to an office in Santa Fe and a studio in Chicago. Through phone conversations with the artists, I gained a better understanding of the ways ledger art can be viewed and enacted, and the motivations behind using such a medium for their messages.

Chris Pappan and Dallin Maybee have distinctly different perspectives on the ledger art tradition, the ways the form can be enacted, and how their identity and rhetoric is represented through ledger art or related narrative art. Conversations with these artists will be placed into direct dialogue with the observation and analysis of the descriptions in the conclusion of this

chapter. The questions for each interview were drafted with Carole Blair's material rhetorics heuristic in mind, drawing on thematic elements of action, interaction, and relationship. I revised each set of questions for the particular artist being interviewed, drawing on examples of their work featured in the *Unbound* exhibit. This is in keeping with my methodological premise that Blair's heuristic must be rhetorically flexible and adaptable to post/de/para-colonial considerations if it is to be productively and responsibly applied to the three different sites I investigate in this study. Thus, for example, in my tailoring of question three to this audience and situation, I asked Dallin Maybee about materiality of his art featured in the exhibit. But in doing so, I made reference to his piece titled "Indian Protection," which is a work that embosses ghost-like figures into the paper. Maybee then went on to describe the process of making that paper.

Our conversations were between 30-45 minutes in length. After initial email exchanges, phone calls were agreed upon as the communication method of choice. Through the phone, I recorded the conversations and informed the artists of that recording. Our conversations began with initial questions regarding how they discovered the ledger art tradition and how they became involved with the curation of the *Unbound* exhibit. From these initial questions, the conversation grew steadily more in-depth and particular to the person with whom I was speaking. The base conversation questions can be found in Appendix C<sup>26</sup>. My decision to take inspiration from Blair's question rather than direct application stems from my desire to create a respectful dialogue in which the conversation questions were nuanced, drawing from the specific work of that individual artist. I noted in Chapter One how personal experience can shift and change perception and employment of a heuristic framework. Through reflection and critical

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<sup>26</sup> Though these questions were influenced by Carole Blair's material rhetorics heuristic, the heuristic's questions were not fit for direct application to conversations with the artists. Therefore, where possible, I attempted to incorporate questions that might have implications for the heuristic. Because of this, I will make occasional connections to the heuristic's questions without framing the entire discussion toward answering them outright.

engagement between the heuristic and the artists' work, I developed a series of base conversation questions that brought together Blair's considerations with observations.

The conversations were neither coded nor broken down for recurring word and syntax patterns, or by recurrent and emergent themes. While I am aware that there exists a long tradition of coded interviews, I did not want my participants' utterances to be distilled to numerical or thematic data that attempted to fully capture the full spectrum of the conversations we engaged. It occurred to me as I prepared for this research that if I decided to code their responses as they respond to Blair's heuristic, my questions would have been shaped by need to acquire responses that were codeable. Furthermore, I was concerned that employing a code-based method would work against the goal of decolonizing this study and would hinder my overall desire to be a part of the conversation(s) I describe as code-based methods value fixed, finalized data. As outlined in Chapter One, my methods have been defined with the intent of emphasizing relationships, which an over-reliance on heuristic-driven data would fail to represent (Wilson). The conversations I observe, discuss, and participate in existed before me and will exist long after me and are ongoing—and they are therefore unfinalizeable. Attempts to codify any part of these various conversations would be the antithesis of what I seek to accomplish in this project. It is for these reasons that I chose to focus on depth, surprise, imagination, silences, history, and story (Riley-Mukavetz). Thus, I tried to find connections and disparities in their answers, looking for how both artists spoke with me, but also how they spoke with each other through their separate dialogues. Likewise, I looked for how their responses spoke to the larger tradition of ledger art as I had encountered it in the archive and the museum. With this in mind, throughout this section, these two artists will appear to speak to each other, a back and forth exchange of meaning further illustrating the importance of conversation. Their words will also be placed into dialogue with

observations made at the *Unbound* exhibit. I will likewise include some of my direct questions and comments, to provide context for our discussion. Before starting that conversation however, I will first provide some biographical information regarding Chris Pappan and Dallin Maybee.

Chris Pappan is an Osage, Kaw, Cheyenne River Sioux, and mixed European artist. He's most well-known for his ledger drawings, which present distorted graphite images that reflect the "distorted perceptions of Native peoples, while proclaiming that 'we are still here!'" and his work in the *Unbound* exhibit reflects this. Five of his pieces are featured, each entirely graphite. (See Figure 4.3 for an example of Pappan's work.) Pappan noted in our discussion that this (graphite and distorted styling) was what set his work apart from the rest, placing his work in stark contrast to where it "sticks out like a sore thumb" in comparison to the bright colors of other work. His is the only work without a spectrum of color in the "Contemporary Expressions" section. He consciously seeks to strike the audience, to make his art impact them through the distortions and the surrealism. In a way, his work is meant to catch audience's off-guard. He jokingly told me regarding the distortion in his work: "People will look at it and say 'oh,' you know, 'that makes me dizzy.'" The imagery resonates, distorted understandings of identity and history. His more current work he often refers to as "Native American Low Brow," examples of which are absent from the exhibit. Pappan was the first to respond to my request for an interview.

Dallin Maybee is a Northern Arapaho and Seneca artist and current Chief Operating Officer of the Santa Fe Indian Market. As a well-known beadworker and lawyer, Maybee started working with ledger art in 2008. His work in the exhibit is full-color and various media, from embossed paper to ledger pages to hide. He told me that after the NMAI had purchased one of his works before, he never thought they would approach him again. Then, he was contacted by

Emil Her Many Horses, the *Unbound* exhibit curator. “This is my budget,” Her Many Horses said. “Can you produce five pieces?” To which Maybee replied with laugh in his retelling, “Well, yeah. For NMAI? Absolutely. I’d love to have just one piece in there.” He went on to speak about the buffalo robe (referenced as part of discussion regarding the exhibit entrances in Chapter Three). “You know,” he said, “the buffalo robe, which is my most traditional piece, still had a lot of contemporary elements to it;” namely, a 1969 Impala among the buffalo and horses, which was a two-dimensional representation of Maybee’s own car.

Both artists shared how they came to be involved in the exhibit. While Maybee was contacted regarding this specific exhibit and asked to create the five pieces for a commission, Pappan’s work was already purchased well in advance of the exhibit’s curation. He voiced that his new work incorporates more color and newer themes and that the absence of that new work was “the only thing I regret about it [the exhibit],” but he cites that this is ultimately how the process works since the process takes so long from inception to opening. At times, during these separate conversations, it would seem both were supporting each other’s statements. A regret of my own is that I could not actually sit down with both artists at the same time for this discussion. Instead, as mentioned earlier, I place them into discussion now. This section will consider their responses regarding the history of the form and its definition, the materiality of the tradition, the interactions between audiences and the artwork, and how the tradition is situated culturally as a means of mediating identity and cultural continuation.

Upon speaking with Pappan and Maybee, I came to the realization that “ledger art” and the definition of it as a form is individual to the artist, drawing on their personal experiences, “their life and their family and their history” (Pappan). I ask both Pappan and Maybee to define the form that we call “ledger art,” what it is and what it does. I follow up this question with the



statement: “If it can be defined at all.” It’s a question I’ve attempted to figure out myself, looking at the diverse examples of the form seen in the *Unbound* exhibit and the archive. Maybee pauses and considers my question then provides a succinct answer: “It’s defined by the artists who make it. Depending on their tribe and their personal experience, the way they define it and engage it changes. It’s really just a pictographic representation of their life and their family and their history.” As I listen to him answer, I am reminded of Pappan’s answer a few weeks before. Rather than provide a brief few sentences, he tells me a story of how his perception of ledger art had changed within the past year:

When I first started doing it [ledger art] my definition of it was, you know, art that’s done on ledger by a Native person. Do you know, when I first started I really thought that that would be the definition of it. But then I got into it more and started doing it more... You know, I’ve had these experiences and learn from these experiences that: Native American people define what their art is. And I say that because I had this experience at the Santa Fe Indian Market a few years ago when I was entering my pieces for the competition to be judged and I defined them as ledger drawings. The people reviewing the work said, they said, “You want this to be ledger art? Well, this isn’t ledger art.” And I said, “Well, I say it is.” [They said,] “It’s not a warrior on a horse, so it’s probably going to be recategorized.” And was just like: what? There’s irony in that because I am saying that this is, “This is ledger art.” And essentially what they said was, “Do you want to win a prize or not?” So I was just like, whatever. Do whatever, but it’s [...] I think it ended up under like mixed media drawing or something. So, here’s the largest Indian art market in the world and they’re not letting me define what my work is.

The artists come to their own understandings of the form, come to different ways of enacting it and putting it into practice. Through my Native rhetoric lens, I am reminded of Scott Lyon’s definition of rhetorical sovereignty, the inherent right and ability of Native peoples to “decide for themselves the goals, modes, styles, and languages of public discourse” (49-40). The artists decide for themselves the ways they choose to represent and enact the tradition. Like these “definitions” of ledger art, I will continue to place Pappan and Maybee into dialogue with each other throughout this section, noting differences and congruencies between their perspectives on

materiality, modes and the possibilities of those modes, how their work (and ledger art) acts on people, and what the significance of ledger art might be within and outside of the exhibit space.

The tradition of ledger art, from various personal and cultural perspectives, figured heavily into our shared conversations. I asked both artists how the materials (such as various forms of paper) factored into the ledger art tradition. This question fell in different parts of these conversations as our discussions did not necessarily follow a neat, linear format. After discussing the relationship between narrative art and mixed media, I asked Maybee about the relationship between the materials and the narratives he creates. Maybee described the use of materials in Native cultures:

Natives in general, especially in art, use whatever is available to them. Some of our more traditional materials...I mean, we were fabricating our own paintbrushes out of bone and plants. And animal parts. Using natural pigments to color our paint and then colored pencils became available and [then] paper. The tradition sort of transferred over pretty easily. Defined by...You know, a lot of people think that ledger art is defined as one specific medium. But it's such an old medium...I think that pictographic narratives is a better description because, you know, ledger paper has only been used for a short time. The ledger art form [that is, pictographic narrative art], you know, predated paper by generations.

Maybee's comments regarding the materials used by Native artists, reminded me of a discussion regarding paper that I had a few weeks prior with Pappan. I mentioned to Pappan that I had been nervous handling the ledger notebooks in the archive, that I had been worried about hurting the paper since it was so old and brittle. "Actually," he said, "I saw a guy on Facebook the other day who was talking about how he was nervous to handle the ledger paper. He did his first drawing on a piece of ledger paper and he was nervous about ripping it." I sat with that for a moment and thought about how nervous I had been in the archive to handle those pieces. A moment later, Pappan went on to explain:

We also have to remember, you know, like for our ancestors that was just paper. You see a lot of these records and stuff that were kept a hundred or, you know,

many years ago and it's not really of use to anyone anymore, except for, you know, being paper that has history on it. The history gives it a little bit of value, but ultimately it's still paper. And what's really cool about it too is that the older it is, the better quality it is. Around the late 1880s, there was a change in the papermaking process so anything after that time period, the paper is more acidic and brittle.

The paper of the ledger art became a central point of discussion in both conversations. While Maybee stressed the tradition predating the introduction or availability of paper, Pappan emphasized the innovation of using paper outside of its intended purpose. "Euro-Americans," Pappan said, "think that back then, and even now, that the book [ledger books] has a specific purpose [...] People can't seem to wrap their heads around it when paper isn't necessarily used for the purpose it's created for."

This brought to mind a piece in Maybee's section of the exhibit, the title of which I scribbled in to the corner of my notebook during my discussion with Pappan: "Identity Protection." The piece was striking in its difference from the surrounding pieces, which were on aged paper. Figures raised in the paper itself casted ghost-like shadows as buffalo and horses ran from one side of the page to the other. (This piece can be seen in Figure 4.3.) Seeing this image in the exhibit, I remembered that the woman at the center riding the horse reminded me of Corcoran's work at the Kansas archives. As I spoke with Maybee, I wanted to understand how the images were embossed in that paper. He explained the process, how the image and the paper would be run through a heavy print roll mill, how the paper was high quality (the "Cadillac of paper"), and how the printmaking and embossing gave the image a sculptural quality. Though one level of embossing is normally enough, Maybee said: "You know what? Why don't we do three and see how sculptural we can make this." He laughed and went further, wanting to expand the process in new ways. "I want to keep experimenting with it [...] I wonder if I [were to] wet the paper a bit if I can get more give out of it." The importance of the materials was never far

from the minds of the artists. The modes and possibilities of the materials used in the production of ledger (or narrative) art often came to the foreground in our discussions, with several tangential explanations from both artists regarding the handling of materials, the exhibition of those materials, and the relationships between the narratives, the materials, and the people who view them.

I asked, “Do you think anything gets lost when your drawings—or anyone’s drawings for that matter—are placed into frames and glass boxes?” I wanted to know an artist’s perspective on something I had been wondering since I started the project: How might we come to understand the relationship between the materiality of the artwork and the frames they are placed within, whether literal frames or manila folders. Pappan replied, “I think when you put it [paper used for ledger art] under glass, you don’t really get that sense of the original intended purpose versus just seeing it as paper with a drawing on it.” He told a story of his participating in a show at the Chicago Public Library, where he displayed a piece that was still part of the ledger book. The book was laid open within a case, fixed to where the drawings were visible. Regarding this, the open-book display, Pappan said, “You can really grasp it— where this all comes from.” Asked the same question, particularly in reference to “Identity Protection” and its shadows in relation to the glass and frame, Maybee cited the individual decision of the artwork collectors or exhibitors. “You have to use a sort of conservation clear or museum quality [glass] so that you don’t get the reflection but [...] just so long as you can capture the relief [...]” These two perspectives on the frames and glass reiterated the importance of including the voices of individual artists in coming to understand these relationships.

Yet, in both answers, the glass remains. It is almost a given, a convention of artwork exhibition. All this time, I worked mentally not to place the frames, glass, and folders into

opposition with the indigenous work that they housed. I realized, after these conversations with Pappan and Maybee, that I had subconsciously defaulted to opposition rather than alliance—the frames, in my mind, were inherently colonial and limiting. In considering Blair’s question of *What does the text do to (or with, or against) other texts?* I situated the art and the frame *against* each other. I often considered the frames as oppositional and restrictive and the glass as obstructive to the narratives. Yet, both artists I spoke with instead considered different ways to work with the frames and glass, be that new methods of display that showcase the physicality and purpose of a ledger book, or the clarity and quality of the glass so that the narrative is not lost or hindered. When speaking with Maybee, he noted that the decision regarding the use of glass was ultimately left up to the collectors themselves: “One guy one collector who, it doesn’t matter what kind of piece is what colors or style he has every piece framed exactly the same. This depends on what the expectations are and what kind of collection they have. You know interior design aesthetic.” From an artist’s standpoint however: “Some people choose not to, you know, frame their work. Or [they] will choose to frame it but it won’t put glass over it. But really just so long as you can capture... just as long as you can capture the relief of it.” Whether left up to the collector or the artist, there is meaning in the glass and its presence as a mediatory material between the audience and the art.

In truth, the materials are a way for artists to interpret their world and their experiences. What audiences take from seeing ledger art is largely dependent on their own lived experiences, cultures, and communities. Though I did not ask the artists to define what they perceive to be the *significance* of their work or the ledger art tradition, there are nods toward that significance—in the way that it has been discussed in this project—in our conversations. There was a moment in my conversation with Maybee, for example, that I told him about my mother’s sudden revelation

of understanding during his part of the Curator's Talk. I recounted, "She turned to me and she said 'I get it now!' I believe you were talking about how it [ledger art] *was* a way to work through trauma, and how it *currently* is a way to work through trauma. She said, 'It get it.' I told myself then that, if I got to talk to you, I would tell you that. It had an impact." That was a moment of significance, of a new understanding, one that I had to relate to him. ("Did she? Oh that's great!" he said. "You know, you never really know when you're up there [what people will take from it.]) Late in our conversation, he made the following statement:

I think every artist tells their interpretation of the world around them and the way that they experience it. You want them [the audience] to understand just a little bit about you through your art. [...] You know, it doesn't really have to be happy. It just has to be compelling enough to affect people on a certain level and people react, of course, based on their personal experience.

Pappan noted, "It [the ledger art] embodies so many different ideas. I think that's why it resonates with a lot of people. But then at the same time, people will kind of shy away from it...Because of the actual, striking visualness of it." There is significance in the layers (in the relationships between those layers): the images, the narratives, the materials, and the people who come to it. Pappan's drawings complicate identity, perceptions of reality and history, and illuminate how his (and perhaps the audience's) perspectives are inevitably distorted—by materials, of course, but by history, culture, and display as well. None of us have unmediated access to the history embodied in the making and viewing of ledger art. People viewing his works, and indeed others in the exhibit and beyond, must consider the "layers of complex history, that is Native American history" in the "relationship between the ledger, the paper, and what's happening in the imagery" (Pappan). And beyond this, the text that accompanies the work, the museum itself, and the land it rests upon. The significance is, once again, in the relationships and connections between materials, images, people, places, and histories.

Histories and connection to the past figured heavily into our discussions. “The *Unbound* exhibit was actually really great,” Maybee said.

You know, there have been attempts before. Smaller attempts. I remember one up in Montana that brought together a bunch of contemporary Native artists, but they didn’t have any of the historical pieces. There’s a museum here in Santa Fe that is primarily known for dealing in antiques, but in the last five years they’ve just started to introduce contemporary artists. There’s never been a ledger art exhibit that highlighted both the historical and the contemporary, so that *Unbound* exhibit was groundbreaking in that it brought together so many contemporary artists and so many historical pieces. It was exciting.

This interplay of past and present, as discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, figured heavily into the exhibit’s structure and Maybee emphasized the importance of the relationships between the work of past and contemporary artists. “You can see the evolution,” he observed. His words echoed Pappan’s earlier—“It shows the evolution.” Within the exhibit and museum space, the connections between past and present figured heavily into the transrhetorical presence of the material rhetorics. From personal narratives to tribal stories, the rhetoric of the drawings, the materials that create and surround them, and the space they inhabit requires that people come to the work with an understanding of these connections or, at the very least, an openness to connection. These connections are made as clear as they can be in sections such as “From Past to Present,” which situates the materials side-by-side so that visitors can see the way meaning moves from piece to piece. An “openness” to connection is a decolonial move. It decenters a singular knowledge and instead moves toward mutual exchange, a reciprocal exchange of meaning-making rather than a consumer-oriented taking of knowledge. In this, small instances in which visitors may see how the tradition carries forward and moves backward, the institutional space of the museum becomes a space for navigating cultural awareness and identity.

We had just finished discussing the historical work that Pappan had encountered at the Heard Museum in Chicago for a more recent exhibit. He was working with and handling a piece

by a Kiowa artist named Silver Horn. He tells me about the sketchbook the man was given to create the drawings for the museum, how ledger books communicate the experiences of the artist, and how Silver Horn “talks” about the Native American church and visions that he had. “You know,” Pappan said after a moment of silence. “The Osage creation story talks about how people came down from the stars and the fact that Native people have their own astrology and astronomy. Different constellations of things. I want to portray that. Different understandings of it by Native peoples.” I think of the lines in Pappan’s work “Wahzhazhe Creation,” the stars and the distortion. This invocation of constellations, this thinking between elements and meanings, and communities, is much like the metaphor of constellations in the work of cultural rhetoric scholars. I refer here to another conversation, one scripted in *Enculturation*. As Malea Powell et al describe it, “a constellation [...] allows for all the meaning-making practices and their relationships to matter. It allows for multiply-situated subjects to connect multiple discourses at the same time, as well as for those relationships (among subjects, among discourses, among kinds of connections) to shift and change without holding a subject captive.” In his work, Pappan seeks to make these connections through consideration of his own identity and his own perceptions of culture through a distorted lens. Sometimes, when a lens (a worldview, a notion of correctness, perhaps even the comfort of the perceived colonial norm) is challenged, it can cause dizziness. It is not merely the fisheye images of Pappan’s work that throws audiences off-kilter. Instead, it’s the notion that the constellations they know are not the only constellations that exist.

## **Conclusion: Aural, Textual, Visual, Material Expressions as Transrhetoric**

In the Discovery Room of the *Unbound* exhibit, there is a kiosk where visitors can interact with two pieces of narrative art. The kiosk, entitled “Telling the Story: Examples of



Narrative Art of the Plains,” is a digital installation that mediates the stories of two dresses: Lauren Good Day Giago’s “A Warrior’s Story: Honoring Grandpa Blue Bird” and the Hunkpapa Lakota muslin dress. Both of these dresses were heavily discussed in Chapter Three. Visitors to the red Discovery Room may press an image of either dress to hear explanations regarding the symbolism of the images, the stories associated with those images, and/or cultural/anthropological commentary on the conventions seen in the images. When a visitor selects the Hunkpapa Lakota dress, the voice of Emil Her Many Horses (the exhibit’s curator) explains the significance of symbols and images on the faded fabric. His voice echoes in the exhibit as he interprets the images, providing an aural metadiscourse regarding the work. If a visitor selects Giago’s dress, they are directed to front and back images of the piece, where they may select an image to read and hear an explanation or story from the artist herself. “Decorated dresses such as this one are worn to honor relatives who have been in battle,” her voice explains. The volume is loud enough that those with lesser hearing might still find the interactive exhibit accessible. “My name is Lauren Good Day Giago, and I painted this dress to honor the achievements of my late grandfather, Emery Good Bird Sr., or Blue Bird.” At the right is a question on the screen: *Do you see the birds painted on the dress shoulders?* The visitor presses *Next* or selects one of the images on their own, to guide their own way to understanding.

Each slide in the presentation explains the images as they appear on the dress. Giago’s voice mediates these explanations and stories. For example, if a visitor selects or comes to the image of the bow-and-arrow, they will hear Giago explaining: “My grandfather, Emery Good Bird Sr., grew up on the Fort Berthold Reservation in North Dakota. As a young man he was known for his hunting ability. He was a skilled marksman both with a bow-and-arrow, and a rifle. This talent served him well throughout his life.” Such personal connections to the piece are

noted throughout the interactive installation, creating a means by which visitors may engage with the narratives of Giago's work. The audience physically affects this supporting material-rhetoric, pressing their fingertips to the digital images of the dress to select the meaning that they want to hear. Though certainly different than the grit of the paper on fingertips, the physicality of the digital installation adds yet another matrix to the material rhetorics present in the exhibit. Likewise, the voice of Giago can be heard from her nearby displayed ledger art section, as it is only about twenty feet from the Discovery Room's entrance. There is significance in the presence of Giago's voice as the only audible artist voice in the exhibit. The presence of her voice works against stereotypes, against perceived cultural norms in the production of narrative and ledger art. While ledger art has largely been considered a male tradition, as noted at various intervals in this project, contemporary female ledger artists actively work against historical gendering of the form, embracing the possibilities of ledger art expression while articulating female perspectives on culture, history, and identity. Similar to how the presence of Dolores Purdy Corcoran's piece in the archive makes known the voices of female artists, Lauren Good Day Giago's voice literally and aurally echoes amongst the vast majority of male voices in narrative art of the exhibit. She speaks back to them. So, too, do the other female artists featured in the exhibit—through the usage of quotes in the descriptions as discussed in the first part of this chapter, and through the mere presence and enunciation of their work within the exhibit space. It is yet another dialogue that takes place.

Artists define their perceptions of narrative and ledger art traditions. They develop their own interpretations of the form and their own ways of engaging it and departing from it. This may result in flouting the historical conventions of the form, choosing subject matter that clashes with what may be considered the 'norm,' making their own paper, or, in the case of women

ledger artists, confronting the added complications of an intersectional identity. And then, with the sweep of graphite or ink or paint, artists join the voices of others, an ongoing dialogue that spans from time immemorial to now and perhaps back again. Who are you? Where are you from? Who are your people? Where are they from? How do you come to know? What have you seen? What have you done? Who are you? What constellation is that? What was your favorite children's book? How long has this game been going now? How did your grandmother do that stitching pattern? What have you seen? What have you done? In the archive, I noted that the horses were running off the page to somewhere else. I observed that the continued presence and articulation of the ledger narratives within that space was significant *action*.

In the exhibit, I mentioned that the notebooks in that archive were in conversation with the work of the artists in exhibit. They speak to each other, across spaces and temporalities, across communities, through something shared. Shared presence, shared motion, shared *space*. From my discussions with Pappan and Maybee, it is clear that audiences (those that view narrative and ledger art) must see these connections for themselves, influenced by their own personal experiences. They must look at the drawings and make the linkages. They must make an effort to see constellations or understandings of constellations outside of the ones they know. One way that this is encouraged in the exhibit is through the metadiscourse, through the inclusion of artist voices in descriptions and the interactive kiosk. In this way, the voice of the artist that is present *in* the artwork is bridged across the distance and meaning becomes transrhetorical. It becomes transrhetorical in a sense of moving meaning. It moves across and between materialities (from the art to the placards to the screens of the exhibit) and modes, from visual to textual to aural and digital.

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*“Next time, I am going to go up and at least introduce myself.” I am cradling my phone in the crook of my shoulder as I type out some quick notes. Outside of my office at the Hall Center for the Humanities, a lawn mower growls. It is immediately after my phone call with Chris Pappan. I have my mother on the phone now, updating her as to how the conversation went. “I should have said something there. That was why I went in the first place.”*

*“You still spoke with him. That’s good. Did you learn a lot? His work is so different from the others in the exhibit. Did he talk about that?”*

*“He said it can make people dizzy because of the distortions. I can see it. It’s supposed to disorient people.” I sit back in my chair and look at the image that is still positioned at the head of my notes for the interview. “I snapped a picture of you with his work, you know. One of the drawings is about generations—I thought it fit. Like, there it was in the piece and then we were there. It fit. I still have it.”*

## CHAPTER FIVE

### **Sketching Change in Prismacolor: Enacting Ledger Art and Transrhetorical Knowledge Spaces**

In November 2016, Google changed their banner to honor James Welch (Blackfeet/Gros Ventre) on what would have been Welch's 76<sup>th</sup> birthday. The banner linked to a page featuring the work of various Native artists and further information on Welch and his influence on literature. The "doodle," (see Figure 5.1) the term used by Google for their multi-site banners, was designed to bear a resemblance to ledger art by a visual designer. From the time-darkened ledger page background to the horses carrying stars across the page and multicolored tipis carrying the Google name letters, the doodle invokes the ledger art tradition through aesthetic similarities. Arrows point to the right and left on either side of the Google name while Welch's portraiture is situated at the center; a small quote from his novel is written along the lines of the ledger: "But the stars were distant and pitiless and gathered their light within themselves. From somewhere far off he heard the hoot of an ears-far-apart." Sophie Daio, the doodle's designer, is of Chinese descent and spent six weeks researching for the doodle's design and consulting with Native American staff members at Google. In an interview with *Smithsonian Magazine*, Daio said regarding ledger art: "It's a really unique style. So pretty. It caught my eye and I really wanted to do something around that. [...] I didn't want it to look like some random person's idea of tribal art." Response to the doodle was relatively positive, with many appreciating Google's representation of Native culture and the narrative art tradition as a "step in the right direction" (Cladoosby). There was however, some critique of Daio's invocation of the ledger art form as no Native artists were consulted in the creation of the doodle, yet the doodle clearly had several stylistic choices reminiscent of Lakota artist, Don Montileaux.

I was tagged on Facebook numerous times when the Google Doodle went live, with friends and colleagues across the country bringing my attention to the ledger art-themed banner. I took time away from drafting the first chapter of this project to retweet posts about the banner on Twitter and comment on posts on which my name had been tagged. I recognized the style—the gradient of colors on the horses and the speckle of white on their rainbow hides as they run from left to right, the gradient of mixed colors in the circles on either side of Welch’s portraiture. In a folder of pictures associated with the project, I saved a screen-capture of the Google Doodle. I considered it important at that time, though I couldn’t say why. As I began to work through discourses within and associated with this project, I saw a connection growing between the doodle and the work I was doing. After speaking with Native artists, the doodle felt more and more hollow to me. Despite not having been created by a Native artist, the ledger doodle was absolutely *inspired* by past and present ways of enacting the ledger art tradition. Perhaps it was an imitation, a presence that didn’t carry the same weight or the same intention and purpose as work created by Native artists, but was still created and there, present. And reiterating much of what I have said earlier in this project, for twenty-four hours, the doodle was another digitally-mediated material presence—Native or non-Native in origin. Whether Google knew it or not, Daio’s creation existed for those few hours in relation to the small notebooks of the Northern Cheyenne at the Kansas Historical Society archives and the pieces featured in *Unbound: Narrative Art of the Plains* exhibit at the National Museum of the American Indian. The doodle also existed in relation to the work of Chris Pappan and Dallin Maybee, the contemporary ledger

artists discussed in the last chapter. It became connected to a much longer and much larger tradition.

That day, audiences that visited either the exhibit or the archive, and other such spaces across North America— and who filtered their searches through Google—placed material narrative art into dialogue with the doodle. Perhaps this was done through the screen of their smartphones or a remembered image from their desktop. Just as I screen-captured the image and placed it in the same digital folder as my observational photos from both the archive and museum, the physical pages of ledger art and material narrative art were placed into conversation with the digitally-designed translation of the ledger art. A series of questions arise from the Google Doodle ledger art, all of which cannot be answered as I conclude my project. Certainly, and obviously, I am compelled to ask if it was “ledger art” that decorated Google’s front page for a single day of Native American History Month. According to Chris Pappan and Dallin Maybee’s definitions in Chapter Four, it would surely not be. It was not created by a Native artist. It told no story, gave no connection to community or tribe, or individual, for that matter. The visual hallmarks were present: horses, tipis, ledger paper. Still, it is not “ledger art.”

In a piece by Vincent Shilling of *Indian Country Today Media Network*, various figures in different Native communities responded to the Google doodle. The responses were mixed between a desire for a more equitable representation of Native Americans by Google and other corporate entities to a desire to see more from Google in order to facilitate a more far-reaching awareness of Native peoples. While several respondents, such as Ernie Stevens, Jr. and Cierra Fields, critiqued the doodle’s lack of acknowledgement of Native American Heritage Month, others found the doodle to be a way to “elevate visibility of Native artists.” For a short time, in Google-mediated consciousness, the “ledger art” of the Google Doodle was representative of

Native artistic expression. It was/is in conversation with the ledger art tradition. While it was live on the Google front page, it spoke to the drawings in the archive and the work in the museum. As it currently exists in archives for Google doodle images, it exists in conversation with a much larger tradition. For a short time, those spaces were visibly connected. That connection had far-reaching implications.

While one might initially think that this connection is wholly positive in its presence as the doodle represents Native identity in what can be largely understood as a corporate or institutional space, it is a much more fraught presence. Certainly, Native peoples were represented and James Welch was honored in the doodle; however, the connection between the ledger art doodle and the art of Native creators is more colonial than decolonial. Though some audiences who are unaware of ledger art's violent history may read the doodle as wholly proactive, to understand the doodle as only positive in its representation is to remove it from a much larger, much more complex context. Despite not having been created by a Native artist and despite having no connection to a specific community, the doodle became linked to the prisoners of war held at Fort Marion—to the drawings of Zotom and Bear's Heart. It became linked to the notebooks of the Northern Cheyenne at the Kansas archives. It was in conversation with the work of contemporary artists. The doodle became linked with the long tradition of narrative art, the story of Native oppression and genocide, and the ongoing work of indigenous peoples as they battle for equitable representation. The doodle was and is neither entirely good nor entirely bad in its presence, and it must be considered as *in conversation with* the much larger material-rhetorical context in which it exists. It is only if we see the doodle as part of a much larger conversation that we can come to understand the deeper, meaningful relationship between these presences.



## A Retrospective on Terms and Connections

Throughout each of the preceding chapters, *conversation* was used as a way to illustrate a variety of relationships between theoretical, material, practical, and cultural dialogues. Certainly, *conversation* was referenced as exchange of knowledge— such as dialogues regarding theoretical and practiced work (“scholarly conversations”), between communities of practice, and mutual exchange of perspectives within individual conversations, such as those I held with Native artists. At times *conversation* was ascribed to an exchange of meaning between materialities, such as between the ledger drawing notebooks and the folders in the archive or the decorated parasol and the ledger art in the *Unbound* exhibit. So, too, *conversation* was referenced in the linkages between land, space, structures, time, and the materials held within them. This can be seen in Chapter Two as the limestone building is placed into direct dialogue with the ledger art of the Northern Cheyenne. This perceived dialogue between texts situated material-rhetorical presences that are/were seemingly disparate into relation with one another, creating webs of relations that deepened understandings of meaning and connection (an observation which I do not claim is at all new or novel to Native peoples, but one that I viewed as important in the construction of material-rhetorical understandings of ledger art and transrhetoricity). At other times in this project, *conversation* was situated as just that: an actual discussion or dialogue between people(s). Though the term was used in various capacities, I constantly viewed all of these different ways of perceiving and enacting *conversation* as occurring within a larger gathering of voices, a larger dialogue concerned with understanding the significance of ledger art in Native culture and history. So it is then that the “scholarly and practical” conversations speak to the “material-rhetorical” conversations which in turn speak to

the “place-based, temporally transient and spatial” conversations which then inform person-to-person exchanges. None of these conversations is absolutely independent of the others; no conversation is without movement or action. And no *conversation*—in these senses—is without cultural and political implications.

Through both the ledger art I encountered and the institutional texts around them, in the spaces discussed in this project, I observed conversations *taking place*. I am reminded here of Malea Powell’s 2012 CCCC Chairs’ Address, “Stories Take Place.” In the performance, Powell defines space as “a place that has been practiced into being through the acts of storied making, where the past is brought into conscious conversation with the present and where—through those practices of making—a future can be imagined” (388). The past being brought into conscious conversation with the present seems to be almost thematic in the creation of ledger art, both in present and past iterations. Each articulation of the tradition, each invocation of narrative art speaks to both past and present, with transmotion carrying presence backward and forward through time. Through the presence of the Northern Cheyenne ledger drawings in the archive, the Kansas Historical Society attempts to uptake the narratives on the notebook pages. They uptake the practiced being of those ledger pages in the present, struggling to imagine a future in which the State of Kansas is practiced into being. An example of this can be seen in the use of the ledger art of the Northern Cheyenne in promotional materials, such as the banner that hangs from the rafters of the research room and the sign in front of the building’s complex. The ledger art is used as a way to validate the history of the state, to practice the claim on the land into being through representing a “Native” connection to that land. Still, the ledger drawings *speak back* to the colonial categories that attempt to define them, to the boxes that attempt to confine them, and to the silencing of Native presence within that space, as well as the appropriation of those images

for the purpose of validating colonial narratives. This *speaking back* was not necessarily framed in terms of opposition, but in terms of building relations and developing/maintaining conscious conversations. Likewise, the idea of *speaking back* was not always framed in response to coloniality, but also culture and gender and to the narrative tradition of which it is a part. Examples of this can be seen both in the examination of Dolores Purdy Corcoran's work conversing with the older ledger drawings in the archive and through the voice of Lauren Good Day Giago in the *Unbound* exhibit speaking to what is/was perceived as a male form of expression. Whether speaking back to silences or speaking back to gendered absences, I did endeavor to frame some conversations as significant in their opposition to colonial or cultural "norms."

The goal of my project has been to consider the ways that materials, presences, and spaces are in dialogue, and how transrhetoricity creates, negotiates, and maintains conversations in order to further our understandings of how material rhetorics can be decolonial in their presence and how transrhetorical material presences might mediate the decolonization of rhetorical spaces. This was done by examining the ways that material rhetorics within two very different institutional spaces interact, the ways that they negotiate, mediate, mitigate, and narrate social action within and across landscapes, temporalities, and knowledges, and then, how Native artists consider the work that they create and the ways that work exists within institutional spaces. The Kansas Historical Society Archives and the National Museum of the American Indian in New York City are geographically disparate (from the Plains to the City), yet they each physically and philosophically are situated at and as intersections. Roads and knowledges and lines cross each other and travelers converse along the way. When I began conducting research for my dissertation, I did not anticipate how the ledger art within each space would relate to other

materialities around it— the land and buildings, the information sheets and placards, the folders and the frames, the other pieces of art. At the archive, I sat with the notebooks of the Northern Cheyenne men who were held as prisoners between the Dodge City and Lawrence jails which were wrapped in white tissue paper and settled into folders. At the museum, I stood before the drawings of the prisoners of war held at Fort Marion, the physical books encased in glass and a digital screen mediating the experience of the ledger books. I did not anticipate how the *presence* and transmotion of the ledger (and narrative) art would connect *across* these spaces: from the plains to the city and elsewhere. These spaces rhetorically enacted the ledger drawings in vastly different ways, with one space emphasizing the narrative art tradition as continuing and dynamic while the other largely mitigated that continuance through the materialities and metadiscourse that surrounded the ledger art. These spaces are also representative of a much larger connection of continuance and transrhetoricity that connects a much larger network of rhetorical knowledge spaces, such as museums, archives, and spaces the world over that hold ledger art within their collections.

As Malea Powell et al. describe, this act of seeing connections across spaces and discourses is an act of constellating: “allow[ing] for multiply-situated subject to connect to multiple discourses at the same time, as well as for those relationships (among subjects, among discourses, among kinds of connections) to shift and change without holding a subject captive.” These connections and movements within and across spaces are rhetorically significant, and scholars in rhetoric and composition (particularly within cultural rhetorics) are currently working to better understand connections such as these, the *constellations* that bring together materials, spaces, communities, and cultures. In this concluding chapter, I will first briefly note the constraints and limitations of this project, describing how those limitations shaped and

influenced the project scope and goals. I will then discuss the ways that various *conversations* connect, how the implications of the project might influence pedagogy, and what impact these understandings of transrhetorical conversations might have on scholarship within rhetoric and composition. Finally, I will consider various possibilities for future research.

## **Frames and the Edge of the Page: On Constraints and Limitations**

In the notebook in which I wrote my notes for the project, I see various scribbles regarding my progression of limitations. Some, self-imposed: “*Do not talk about the Unbound Facebook tour by Ruth— June 12, 2016.*” Some notes acknowledged physical and monetary limitations: “*I can’t make it back, can I?*” Given the constraints of finances and time, I was not able to visit the *Unbound: Narrative Art of the Plains* exhibit more than once. Likewise, for the same reasons, I was not able to go speak in-person with the artists featured in this project. It should not go without acknowledgement that this limited interaction with both the exhibit and the artists affected this project’s development and observations. The *Unbound* exhibit closed in December 2016 and, as consequence, there will be no opportunity to return to the exhibit for further observations in the future development of this project. Though the research was limited to a single visit to a main site of inquiry, analysis was supplemented through virtual access to exhibit images with the support of the NMAI and the STQRY application that accompanied the exhibit. Each was essential in the consideration of the material-rhetorical presences of these spaces. Though I do intend to further develop my relationships with the Native artists featured in this project— particularly Chris Pappan, Dallin Maybee, and Lauren Good Day Giago—in the future, the study as it stands is constrained by the duration, access, and repetition. I felt, at many times in the research process, that I was not able to form reciprocal and mutually beneficial

relationships in keeping with Barnardt's 4Rs of indigenous research. Despite this, the conversations that we had were very enlightening and offered much to the discussion of ledger art and materiality within this project's scope. This is an aspect of the project that I intend to grow from and develop in future iterations of this research.

At various intervals throughout this project, I struggled with the application of a heuristic in the consideration of the ledger art and other materialities. It could be argued that there are similarities between the categorizations seen in the archive (Eurowestern modes of organizing identities, histories, and temporalities) and a heuristic set of questions which seeks to neatly delineate experiences and knowledges. Kū Kahakalau argues concerning heuristic research that: "Only through continuous self-search, self-dialogue, and self-discovery, and an unwavering belief that knowledge grows out of direct human experience and can be discovered and explicated through self-inquiry, can an environment be created that allows the research question and the methodology to flow out of inner awareness, meaning, and inspiration" (22). While Western research, and particularly historical heuristic method/analysis, traditionally privileges a researcher's neutrality as an observer, I consistently engaged my own lived experience. Throughout the process, I was very mindful of the heuristic's potential to limit that experience. I was very careful from the onset not to allow the heuristic to overpower the conversations observed within the archive, the museum, and the dialogues with artists. Instead, I used the heuristic as inspiration for considering different angles and approaches to the materials and their interactions/ relationships. Though at times the heuristic may seem as if it were constraining the experiences, it would be more apt to say that the heuristic acted as a frame—in a similar manner to the way such frames and glass cases were discussed in Chapter Four. That frame is certainly

rhetorically significant, but does not remove meaning from the other materialities that surround it or are housed within it. Instead, they exist and make meaning together.

In retrospect, I came to realize that my work— my interrogation of the archives, my observations at the museum, and my conversations with artists— was not decolonial in the way I had imagined at the project’s onset. For example, in the archive, when confronted with a tagging system that clearly situated ledger art within the frames of the institution (such as the filing of ledger art under the tag of *Immigration and Settlement*), I did not take action to confront or change that system of categorization. In hindsight, I might have directly challenged this. Perhaps it is a decolonial action in recognizing that this issue in categorization exists so that further actions may be taken to suggest and implement alternatives to such systems. As violence erupted at Standing Rock, where water protectors fought tirelessly against the encroaching Dakota Access Pipeline, I looked at my work and wondered how that work could contribute and be more equitable. I found myself struggling for an answer. How I confront this and frame my later discussion of contributions to the field of rhetoric and composition may be an answer, though only part of one. Decolonization is a daunting task, overwhelming in its breadth and depth. Rather than a single voice, it requires an ongoing conversation among many. Though this project is limited and constrained by various different factors, such as money and time, I like to think that those limitations are like the edges of a page. The narrative does not necessarily end at the edge of that page, but extends elsewhere.

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*It is October 2016. I am attending the Cultural Rhetorics Conference at Michigan State University. The space is vibrant and wonderful and powerful. Though I am not presenting on ledger art or my dissertation work, I carry that work with me into that space. There are many*

*conversations over the course of the weekend regarding the project—where it’s going, what it’s doing. I sit at a table and do beadwork for the first time, and I speak to a colleague and friend about the project.*

*“Are you going to Gail’s presentation later?” She asks. “I’ll see you there.”*

*The room is nearly full, and Gail Mackay speaks quickly, handing out small notecards. She asks that everyone take notes about how they receive her words and ideas. She then passes around a pipe bag that had been made for her. It smells strongly of tobacco, and I keep that scent with me for the rest of the day.*

*Instead of taking notes, I draw.*

*I draw the flowers on her bag, my understanding of her rhetorical situation sketch, and an iris. I think about the drawings that I look at every day and I wonder if my meaning is clear. It seems like a meaningful moment when I hand it over with no name. I can’t say why.*

*Some months later, I receive a comment on my blog post regarding the conference. I recounted this experience there.*

*Turns out: She kept the drawing and has it tacked up in her china cabinet.*

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## **Implications for the Field of Rhetoric and Composition**

In this section, I will highlight the major implications of this project for the field of rhetoric and composition. Particularly, I will note the motion of ledger art and transrhetorical materiality—how considerations of transrhetorical materialities can reframe the way scholars in rhetoric and composition understand the relationships between material presences as a way of furthering our understanding of decolonial rhetorical practices. I will then connect to the idea of motion and transmotion, as shown in the ledger art featured in this project. Transmotion and



transrhetorical analysis bear significance on the implementation of multimodal pedagogies in writing classrooms while ledger art provides a potential visual and material conduit by which students may engage with indigenous cultural production. Finally, this section briefly notes the work of “delinking” and decolonizing the study of institutional spaces within rhetoric and composition, considering how we might draw lines and build alliances through conversations.

### *Transrhetoric: Making Connections Between Materialities*

As already established, to better understand the interconnectedness of the material-rhetorical texts within both the archive and the museum, I chose to use Carole Blair’s heuristic for material rhetorics to frame analysis. The heuristic was often used as a way to observe textual interactions, to see conversations between materials. While current views of material rhetorics do understand the situated relationships between material texts (that is, the rhetorical significance of “spatial organization, mobility, mass, utility, orality, and tactility”), there has been little consideration of the way meaning moves across, between, through, and amongst materialities. While notions of rhetorical networks and accretions speak to the co-construction of meaning within spaces (Clary-Lemon), amongst complex layers of experience, such understandings do not account for indigenous conceptualizations of material relationships. Likewise, conceptualizations of fixed materiality preclude the interconnectedness of materials that are situated outside of a particular space, such as singular museums and archives. This is to say, the understandings of material rhetorics need to be broadened and deepened, particularly by engaging with indigenous perceptions of materiality. In this project, I bridged this gap by integrating and challenging Blair’s heuristic as a way of fostering discussion that indigenizes the consideration of material relationship and rhetoricities. By drawing hard lines, so to speak, at the

walls of a museum or archival space (or any site of public memory), the presence, life, or meaning of a material presence is cut off from the much larger presence or conversation to which it is connected. The layers of meaning and presence in both historical and contemporary ledger art speaks to the *transrhetoricity* of material rhetorics.

As noted in Chapter One, Rachel Jackson argues that *transrhetoric* denotes “the movement of rhetorics across multiple location categories—historical, spatial, temporal, cultural, local, regional, national, and global, as well as across disciplines” (“Locating Oklahoma,” 305). While Jackson speaks to the spatial and temporal transactions of rhetorics, this project sought to delve further into transrhetorical meaning-making, to see the ways that material rhetorics might influence or be influenced by the movement of meaning across spaces, temporalities, *and materialities*. In this, it was not the goal of this project to draw hard lines *around* the archive and the museum—to create borders. Instead, the goal was to draw lines between the archive and the museum and artists and the drawings and the folders and the frames and the buildings and the land (and me).

Material rhetorics often frame the study of materials as in the present, in a fixed situation or location. This fixity does not necessarily preclude action however. What emerges from a consideration of *transrhetorical* materialities is a more holistic understanding of the relationships that exist between materials—not merely in a sense of Barbara Dickinson’s collaborative meaning-making between materials as “collud[ing] and collid[ing],” but also in a sense of continuing across spaces and times. In *Our Story Begins Here*, Malea Powell et al. make a call for the reorientation of rhetoric and composition practice from the rhetorical framework of merely objectifying materials, but rather seeing relationships in the materials themselves as valuable and important in the research paradigm— “Often, human practices become objects of

study that are reduced to texts, to artifacts, to objects, in a way that elides both makers and systems of power.” An approach that considers transrhetorical materialities centralizes relationships, first and foremost, and therefore likewise must account for coloniality, power systems, and the makers who practice the material into being. If we are to continue the decolonization of rhetoric and composition as a field, particularly the study of material rhetorics, then we must reorient ourselves to consider the “presences” of non-Western materialities. And, we must open our minds to think about material rhetorics in a way that does not privilege or centralize perceived fixity, such a privileging the walls of the archive over the ledger drawings, or any other non-Western mode.

It is clear from the various examples of ledger art featured in this project that *continuing* is an action that the art performs. It continues tradition. It continues narratives. It continues to relate personal narratives to an audience. It continues to articulate identity and sovereignty. It continues to challenges the perceived fixity of institutional and colonial knowledge spaces. The work in the archive continues to the work in the exhibit which continues to the discussions with artists. In this, ledger art has long been referred to as an act and work of survivance (Pearce, Battiste, Vizenor). Gerald Vizenor defines survivance as “an active sense of presence, the *continuance* of native stories, not a mere reaction, or survivable name. Native survivance stories are renunciations of dominance, tragedy, and victimry” (vii). Survivance has been argued in a variety of ways, particularly within the field of rhetoric and composition, from the invocation of Eurowestern rhetorical practices to the active survival and resistance of Native communities. The ledger art pieces featured in this project are certainly forms of survivance, each as individual as the artists that brought them into being. Each speaks their survivance from their locations through the movement on their pages, eschewing the physical barriers by which they might be

thought to be “held” by and instead carrying over and connecting to the *presence* of other pieces that live elsewhere.

It is therefore important to remember that the ledger art of this project is constantly *in motion*. Even the images included as “Figures” in this document are in motion.

This transmotion, and transrhetoric, is a form of survivance.

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*As I draft this chapter, I am teaching. It is difficult to separate my teaching from my writing, both are such large elements of my life. In my cultural rhetorics course, they often align as we speak about constellations, ways of knowing, and diverse ways of making meaning. One day, I bring along the drawing by Dolores Purdy Corcoran and the piece by Raul Davis from the Haskell market. I take them out and set them up at the front of the room. I pass them around as I speak about meaning-making and communities. I tell them to pay attention to the images, to the materials they are drawn on, what they can decipher and what they can't. I tell them that what they know and what they don't know are valuable.*

*They're observing the drawings, fingers pressing over the plastic covers when one observant student looks up. “They're photocopies though. These are both basically photocopies, right? Could you not bring the real ones because they're fragile? Is this a trick question?”*

*They're thinking about the materials, how the modes interact. They're thinking about how the experience changes when it is not an actual leaflet of that old paper Pappan spoke about. It's thick photo paper. What changes then? They all look to me for an answer. I am proud that they noticed such a detail.*

*“Well, to be honest...” I scratch at the back of my head and smile. “I can't afford the real versions.”*

*They're both prints, yes, but the horses all still seem to be in motion.*

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### *An Argument for Transmotion/Transrhetoric in Multimodal Scholarship and Pedagogy*

Transrhetorical materiality is seen in the conceptual application of Gerald Vizenor's *transmotion* as a means of understanding the temporal and spatial movement of the ledger art's rhetoricity. Though much scholarship regarding material rhetorics implies a sort of lack of physical or metaphysical motion, the rhetoric of ledger art requires an understanding of its inherent movement across materials, spaces, and times. In "The Postindian Rhetoric of Gerald Vizenor," John D. Miles makes an argument for alignment between Vizenor's concept of transmotion and the field of rhetoric and composition – "the implication of rhetoric and composition studies lies in the fact that *transmotion* is about ownership of rhetorical invention and production, and *it is always cast in motion*" (44, emphasis mine). He cites Carolyn Miller's "kinetic energy of rhetorical performance," situating both theories and understandings of agency side-by-side (44). What emerges in Miles' discussion is that a rhetoric must "find the motion and space to promote change" by rhetors situating their own agency and in that agency creating, harnessing, and/or inspiring movement (46). Certainly, there is kinetic energy in the concept of transmotion; just as there is kinetic energy in the idea of transrhetoric. Both move and shift and change. And in order for the rhetoric of any text to be understood, it must first be seen as part of an ever-shifting network of material-rhetorical presences. (And likewise, as part of a network of relations.) Yet, rhetoric and composition has largely ignored Vizenor's theory of transmotion (Miles). In fact, it was not until recently that Native and non-Native scholars in rhetoric and composition began citing Vizenor's theories within their scholarship. This is perhaps one effect

of the centrality of Eurowestern alphabetic texts or fixed modes and the work of indigenous scholars and allies to decolonize the field.

In a recently published collection of essays entitled *Survivance, Sovereignty, and Story: Teaching American Indian Rhetorics*, the first Native or indigenous pedagogical resource book in the field of rhetoric and composition, Sundy Watanabe cites that understanding “transmotion as movement or action across time makes survivance and rhetorical sovereignty more visible” (42). Watanabe observes transmotion through multimodal composition practices that push back against Eurowestern approaches to literacy and composition. The obvious connection between ledger art and multimodality cannot go unacknowledged. As a mixed media art form, ledger (and narrative) art is necessarily multimodal. And, in that multimodality, it is also transrhetorical. Likewise, we might also consider the interactions of materials within the archive and exhibit to also be multimodal. While this project does not seek to make an argument regarding the multimodality of ledger art, it is important to note that there are implications for multimodal scholarship in the understanding of transrhetorical material presences and in understanding potential linkages to indigenous making practices. The materialities and modes speak to and affect each other—the images, the paper, the paints, and graphite, the folders and frames, and the buildings they are housed within to the oralities and narratives they are linked to, to land and communities; each is an important to the overall consideration of a material’s rhetoric. And across these various ways of making-meaning and housing-meaning, there is a shared sense of movement and moment.

A moment ago I noted that I do not seek to make an argument regarding the multimodality of ledger art, as I understand multimodality to be “part and parcel of teaching [and understanding] indigenous rhetoric” (Watanabe 45). Within the field of rhetoric and

composition's conceptual frameworks, I take ledger art to be understood as a multimodal composition, made up of various layers and modes that convey meaning. Instead, what I hope can be extrapolated from this project is another way to approach the relationship between elements of multimodal compositions, particularly those that engage Native materialities. The "interplay between meaning-making systems (alphabetic, oral, visual, etc.)" and "multiple ways of knowing" are centered in current understandings of multimodal pedagogy, yet while it is not usually culturally inflected, the multimodal pedagogy of rhetoric and composition can still be indigenized and "delinked" from Eurowestern epistemic systems. I will further discuss "delinking" in the following section, but for now, I maintain that indigenizing multimodal pedagogy requires constant work to decenter colonial knowledges, thereby truly acknowledging and enacting "multiple ways of knowing." As many Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars note, there is an ongoing struggle in rhetoric and composition for equitable representation, productive discussion, and the reorientation in Eurowestern academic thinking<sup>27</sup>. More particularly, what I am arguing here is that ledger art offers a way for people (teachers, scholars, students) to see remediations not only across media and modes, but possibly across materials, sign systems, spaces, times, and cultures.

One method of incorporating such discussions into our classrooms is through making decolonial conversations visible for our students in ways that are accessible. An example of this would be placing the Google doodle mentioned earlier in this chapter in conversation with the

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<sup>27</sup> There are too many scholars doing this important work to name in a parenthetical citation. Instead, I honor their work here. If I have not named someone, this was not intended as a slight against their contribution. These scholars are: Joyce Rain-Anderson, Resa Crane Bizzaro, Damien Baca, Ellen Cushman, Qwo-Li Driskill, Lisa King, Victor Del Hierro, Daisy Levy, Scott Richard Lyons, Walter Mignolo, Malea Powell, Margaret Price, Andrea Riley-Mukavetz, Victor Villanueva, and many others. This list does not include the many interdisciplinary scholars whose work has also contributed to the ongoing decolonial moves taking place within the field of Rhetoric and Composition.

work of contemporary Native artists. My use of “conversation” here is intentional. The natural default for such a discussion would be to place the two images into contrast, looking only for how the two are different and in tension with one another. Conversation instead notes the tension and the alliance in the images, how they depart from each other and how they come together. Students in writing classroom would be challenged to consider the different meaning-making systems that are present in the two images, how communities are represented within both, and how meaning moves across both examples. Likewise, with such an assignment, students might also consider the digital mediation of the Google doodle, the materiality of the ledger drawing, and the visual/cultural rhetorics that are present in both. Seeing relationships between narratives, materials, visualities, cultures, and practice illustrated in this way within a writing classroom would also further unsettle the centrality of alphabetic modes, opening up a discussion of multimodal composing and encouraging students to facilitate discussions of respect, equity, and cultural awareness.

Throughout this project, I often invoked the concept of *constellations* and *constellating*. In my conversation with Chris Pappan, I link his mention of constellations—the Osage creation story and different ways of understanding the stars—to the Malea Powell et al’s argument for a constellation of meaning-making practices in which various methods of making meaning matter. That constellative practice therefore also allows “relationships (among subjects, among discourses, among kinds of connections) to shift and change without holding a subject captive.” The potential connection between ledger art and multimodality is that its use as an example in the composition classrooms may create visible constellations by which students become “cognizant of [Indigenous] stories [...]” thereby creating the potential space for students to further the discussion and action of creating and maintaining equitable relationships (Dion 4).



Ledger art, particularly by virtue of its transrhetorical materiality, lends itself to the creative mode of Rubén Gaztambide-Fernandez's 'solidarity as pedagogy.'<sup>28</sup> In that creative mode, students must "rethink encounters [...] in ways that rearrange the hierarchical symbolic orders that produce the very differences that make those encounters legible" (56). And further, the ways culture (and spaces) are created, maintained, and resisted "impl[ies] different symbolic arrangements that are not distinctly separated from other arrangements, but are extensions and manifestation of larger social, economic, and political, as well as cultural, arrangements" (61). Particularly, I see ledger art as an example through which we may see constellations, to see legible encounters between indigenous and colonial symbolic orders, and to further the presence and representation of Native meaning-making in rhetoric and composition classrooms by critically engaging the arrangements that influence the creation of ledger art. Likewise, by having students engage with both historical and contemporary ledger art, they might further interrogate the interplay between colonial and indigenous systems.

### *Delinking: Continuing the Decolonization of Rhetorical Knowledge Spaces*

While the pedagogical implications of this study set forward the potential of ledger art as an example Native American visual and material rhetoric with the potential of continuing the ongoing indigenizing of composition classrooms, this project has further implications in other institutional spaces that centralize Eurowestern knowledges. From its onset, this project

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<sup>28</sup> Rubén Gaztambide-Fernandez (2012) defines 'solidarity as pedagogy' as a "shift away from either explaining or enhancing existing social arrangements, seeking instead to challenge such arrangements and their implied colonial logic" (49). In this he suggest that there are three intertwining modes of solidarity: relational, transitive, and creative. The relational mode finds its origin in the work of Indigenous scholars in the creation and maintenance of relationality, creating equitable and respectful thoroughfares for discussion and work. The transitive mode refers to the subjective experience of practice. Finally the creative mode centralizes multimodalities and multiliteracies as a means of understanding various cultures through the meaning-making systems.

established the goal of observing the way rhetorical knowledge spaces create, negotiate and maintain conversations regarding indigenous cultures and how those spaces communicate those conversations into public memory. In particular, this study examines the ways that ledger art was framed within the ongoing conversations of the archive and the museum, considering how the conversation crosses these spaces, how the spaces themselves are intersections, and how the narratives connect within and between two locations and spatialities that are so seemingly disparate. A consideration of the transrhetorical presences and conversations within archives and museums (as well as other institutional spaces) holds significant implications for the field of rhetoric and composition. Foremost, it requires us to continue the important task of decolonizing rhetorical knowledge spaces—such as archives, museums, and the conversations around us and in which we participate—that perpetuate coloniality. This work is certainly not the first to observe the influence of colonial matrixes and epistemologies in the archive and museum. Native and non-Native scholars have been doing this work for some time, challenging the hegemonic systems of power that impose colonial narratives onto indigenous peoples, spaces, and materials<sup>29</sup>. To those scholars that study decolonial, indigenous, and cultural rhetorics, the fact that the ledger drawings of the Northern Cheyenne were filed under *Immigration and Settlement* within the Kansas archive likely comes as little surprise. Likewise, the fact that the entrance to *Unbound* was situated between celebratory portraits Verrazzano and Columbus likely would inspire nothing more than an unsurprised nod.

If we—as scholars of rhetoric and composition—take these spaces to be in conversation, speaking to each other across great distances, and if we understand the materials within them to

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<sup>29</sup> Earlier, I noted the influence of various scholars on this work through their contributions to decolonizing institutional frameworks that perpetuate inequity. Those same names apply here, with the addition of names such as Vine Deloria, Danielle DeVoss, Janice Gould, Rose Gubele, Angela Haas, Kimberli Lee, Jim Ridolfo, Linsa Tuhiwai Smith, Ernest Stromberg, Gerald Vizenor, Shawn Wilson, and many others who are not mentioned here.

be speaking to each other as well, then a much larger picture emerges. Whether it is through the imposition of imperialistic concrete or limestone structures on occupied land with the notion of denoting permanence or the categorization of ledger drawings into narrow colonial categories, the archive and the museum often endeavor to stop motion. Yet the movement continues—a series of interconnected lines, drawn through *motion* that coloniality does not account for within its perceived fixity. Motion that Native peoples have always seen and understood, and which can be seen in the ledger art “held” within both spaces. Ledger art not only articulates Native epistemologies and ontologies that work against the colonial matrix of power exhibited by institutional spaces, but they also, by virtue of their transmotion and transrhetoricity, break “conceptual fields” around “civilization, humanity, and knowledge” (Cushman 126). Exploring the material-rhetorical presence of ledger art within the archive and the museum necessitated discussion with ledger artists as a way to further decolonize rhetorical work within those spaces. This therefore connected out to the *practice* of ledger art and the artists’ understandings of that practice—how they perceived and enacted it based in their own individual experiences and from the traditions of their own communities. Likewise, the marked inclusion of artist voices demonstrated the ways that the artist’s individual practice of the ledger art tradition broke with “tradition” as well, be that through the creation of materials, the distortion of images, or other individual approaches that articulated their “voice” in the conversation. Bringing together the artists, the museum, and archive created a web of connected dialogues.

Through these constellations<sup>30</sup>, we must come to understand the archive and the museum as much more than the lifeless spaces they are sometimes perceived to be. Instead, as we

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<sup>30</sup> At the 2016 Cultural Rhetorics Conference, it was announced that a new journal would be starting. This journal would provide a space for scholars of cultural rhetorics to share their work. As I finish drafting this project, the first call for papers has been circulated. The journal will break the boundaries of “traditional scholarly journals, presses, and online forums” to sponsor a space in which media pieces may range from webtexts to multimodal submissions

continue to engage such institutional spaces, we must not draw hard lines around them. We must draw lines *between* these spaces. We must draw lines between institutions and communities, communities and individuals, individuals and materials, past and present.

### **Sketching Change: Looking for the Right Lines of Alliance**

The question then becomes: *How do we draw those lines?* Scholars have already begun sketching change within the field of rhetoric and composition. From wampum belts to basket making to story circles, Native scholars and non-Native scholar-allies have been and continue to further the study of indigenous ways of knowing and making in methodological, practical, and pedagogical senses. The implications of my study are ultimately situated within that movement, bringing the visual-and-material rhetorics of ledger art into the larger conversation of the rhetoric and composition scholarship, and attempting to erase perceived barriers that denote the archive and museum as monolithic colonial structures. In the previous section, I noted that the various implications of this project included understanding how transrhetorical materialities work against perceived fixity, how material-rhetorical presences exemplifying transmotion and movement might influence multimodal pedagogy, and how we might further delink from Eurowestern epistemologies by observing institutional spaces as in conversation with one another. Drawing the lines requires that scholars actively work to decenter Eurowestern ways of knowing, “delinking” from the colonial matrix of power, as mentioned earlier. It is only through observing and participating in conversations across various spaces and times that such lines can be drawn, and the spaces between filled with prisma-color as bright and diverse as those engaging in the dialogue.

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to “forms we haven’t imagined yet” in addition to the more traditional articles and monographs. This new journal will be called *constellations*.

Conversation, transrhetoric, decolonizing. Constellations. Ledger art.

The archive, the museum, my office, a classroom.

Artists, teachers, researchers, students. Native, non-Native.

I am attempting to draw here, you see. Not all of the lines are straight. Not all of them are immediately visible. Some are indigenous. Some are not. Some are my own. Some are old. Some are new, with the ink still drying. Some have not yet been drawn. Some are drawn by others. Some are drawn over by others. Some are dark and heavy and confident. Others are tentative and light, barely pressing into the paper. The image isn't quite clear yet, but there are some lines and some color, a spectrum.

There are many authors, many hands on the paper. Many fingerprints.

As I consider here the potential for future research, which has also been scattered throughout this chapter at various intervals, I am reminded to think in terms of building alliance and relation and to see the ways that scholars in rhetoric and composition may contribute to the overarching goal of decolonizing and indigenizing the study and teaching of writing. My repeated refrains of conversations, constellations, and drawing the lines is essentially calling for further awareness of Native presences, actions, and realities. Ledger art is only one example of many Native ways of making meaning that has been largely ignored by the general field of rhetoric and composition. Ultimately, it is the building of connections and conversations that is important to the future work of the field. By building and enacting responsible, respectful, and reciprocal alliances, we can influence, challenge, and positively affect changes in the rhetorical knowledge spaces we inhabit and transit. Likewise, the action of building alliances and drawing connective lines—drawing constellations—directly problematizes the idea of the monolithic institution. Archives become more interconnected and less tied to their own colonial perception

of permanence. Museums become a space for seeing the interconnectedness of experiences. And dialogue with individuals becomes the method by which we come to understand meaning-making practices. This is not to say that such work has not been done before. I am not breaking new ground in calling for alliance or in calling for conversation. Within the field of rhetoric and composition, scholars such as Ellen Cushman, Scott Richard Lyons, Gwendolyn Pough, Malea Powell, Jacqueline Jones Royster, Victor Villanueva, and others have continued to challenge and complicate the discipline's fixed focus on Eurowestern meaning-making and the exclusion of rhetorics considered outside of the Greco-Roman tradition (Anderson, King, Gubele 4). However, more work needs to be done to respectfully and responsibly engage with indigenous rhetorics. Below, I offer my future plans for enacting such alliance.

### *Alliances and Drawing Outside of the Lines*

Above my desk, there is a ledger drawing— or rather, something like it. It is an image that has been passed around on the internet since the beginning of the #NoDAPL movement through social media routes. On the backdrop of a concrete wall, a black snake bears its fangs while various figures representing different indigenous cultures of North America battle it. The graffiti piece, painted by Tyler Read (a non-Native artist with a Lakota wife and child), invokes the ledger art tradition through the inclusion of a Lakota warrior who runs toward the black snake on horseback. Another warrior— a bird representing the Native peoples of the Pacific Northwest— swoops in from above while yet another warrior representing nations of the southwest prepares to challenge the black snake from the side. The Lakota warrior on horseback is composed in the style of Don Montileaux, with the horse's legs narrowing into points. Unlike the Google Doodle from the beginning of this chapter with no input from ledger artists, Read

spoke with Montileaux before completing the work and consciously replicated his work with the artist's involvement. Above my desk, the printed image of this ledger art-inspired graffiti is tacked below Dolores Purdy-Corcoran's piece from the NMAI gift shop and Raul Davis' ledger drawing I purchased on the pow wow grounds at Haskell. As I look up at the images, I am reminded of how much I still have to learn. There is movement in the drawings, yes, as the horses run from one edge of the page to the other. There is action in these drawings, beyond their places as they are tacked onto my wall.

It's the action in these images, the presence of them—that movement and motion—that reminds me where I must begin.

I use “begin” here with purpose.

I see the drawings of the Northern Cheyenne on those small notebooks in the archive and I see the works of Chris Pappan and Dallin Maybee, and other contemporary artists in collections and museum exhibits around the globe. I see some in person, feel the grit on my fingertips. I see some through the screen of my computer. I see the ledger art that crosses my Facebook timeline, smeared with black ink like oil and red horses. I see a warrior on horseback battling a black snake on a wall in Rapid City. They are all linked, even despite a non-Native painter's brush bringing the warrior to that location. The warrior had been somewhere else before by Don Montileaux's hand. I see a shared presence, a transrhetorical presence, a networked Native presence that is practiced into being through lines, colors, and something that I cannot know fully. I see lines drawn, some new, some old.

I have come to understand, too, through my project that I must practice myself into being as well. After the first round of reviews by my readers, I was asked: *What does this do to you? How does this affect you?* Throughout this project, there were small narratives regarding how the

ledger art has affected me as well as how it has affected my family. I think more in images than I do in words at the moment. I cannot say why that is, but I suspect it is hours of looking at images and trying to understand. I consider how material objects exist together and make meaning together and how they interact and how I interact with them. I allow for silence more comfortably now, so that I can listen better. While I could use the metaphor of there being many “blank pages” ahead, I know that the metaphor is not apt. The pages are never truly blank. Instead, I will say that there are still lines to be drawn—not in the sense of division, but in the sense of connection and alliance. I still have many lines to draw, and some that need to be erased and redrawn again.

There are several connections I hope to make in the future, the first of which is to further develop my relationships with Native artists, such as Chris Pappan and Dallin Maybee. In developing those relationships, I hope to be able to create more reciprocal relationships in which artists have an equally beneficial role in the research I am doing. Likewise, I hope to bring the work of Native artists into the field of rhetoric and composition, where the work of contemporary Native visual artists is largely absent. While bringing together the visual work of Native artists and the rhetoric and composition field, I also hope to develop guides and resources for scholars in the field who would like to respectfully incorporate Native visual arts, such as ledger art, into their curriculum. While I have already begun this pursuit by participating as a facilitator of the Handcrafted Rhetorics workshop at the Conference on College Composition and Communication, I see potential in further developing resources that are accessible to a wide range of instructors, perhaps through an online or digital resource page that connects current events with narrative art. This would only serve to expand on the work of scholars who have



come before me, providing a foundation for discussion of pedagogies associated with indigenous rhetorics.

There is also the potential to expand discussion of ledger art as an expression of activism and social change. This was hinted at earlier in this chapter, with references to the #NoDAPL movement. I titled this section “Sketching Change: Looking for the Right Lines of Alliance” for this reason. As a non-Native scholar, who is still learning and developing as an ally, I have searched for the methods of tracing my own allyship. In a cultural rhetorics course taught while writing this dissertation, I situated ledger art alongside hip-hop songs associated with the water protectors at Sacred Stone fostering discussion of sovereignty, survivance, and activism. We discussed alliance. Though this project was ‘limited’ to a single archive, a single exhibit, and active conversation with two independent artists, I see enormous potential in expanding the discussion to the ledger (and narrative) art that is associated with water protector movements and other forms of activism.

Within a smaller, but no less important context, such an expansion particularly within the field of rhetoric and composition would continue the work of decolonizing the discipline in productive ways. Of course, this is not a task that is accomplished without a community of dedicated scholars who take action, start essential conversations, and develop theories and pedagogies that support changes within the field. This work is an ongoing and constantly-developing sketch of rhetorical movement across spaces, times, communities, identities, and materialities. And what that movement can tell us about how we perceive and understand material presences and the rhetoricity of those presences. Likewise, how we might help to make those connections and conversations clear for our students so that they may be aware and equitable.

From the archive in the plains to the museum in the battery, to places and spaces in-between, and the lines drawn between them, ledger art shows us a different way to perceive conversation and, perhaps, it provides another way to foster conversation as well.

By no means does this work uncover a perfect dialogue, but instead one in-progress from page to page with smudges in the ink.

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*I am sitting in a hospital room. It is midday in winter, but the seat by the window is warm. I'm the only one in the room, left to the silence and occasional beeps and the rowdy Western playing on the box television overhead. My notebook, the very same notebook that had accompanied me to the archives and the museum, sits propped on my lap. I use my pen to sketch a few lines, glancing up every now and then to the flowers and vase that sit at the bedside.*

*I only have highlighters on me, tucked into my purse. I set them out on the heater by the window. I use them to paint. Blue and purple, brown and gold. The flowers become brown and a mix of blue and purple. I drag the ink with my fingertip to the end of the petals. I mix the colors, dragging them up and down into each other. No matter the distance I have from the notebooks at the Kansas archive, I still see fingerprints.*

*My grandmother returns from her test. My mother trails behind her. I leave the notebook and return to it hours later to find my own fingerprint dried in the ink. It's not the same, of course, as the fingerprints in the archive. It is not a drawing that communicates my identity or speaks back to anything in particular. It's not ledger art. Not at all. But my fingerprint is still there and there are words scripted next to the flowers: Hoping for more good days.*

*I do not know how the moment is significant, but it is.*

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## APPENDIX A

### **“Pictures drawn by Wild Hog and Other Cheyenne Indians”**

**Item Number:** 208521

**Call Number:** Indians History Coll. #590 Box 2, Folder 23

**KSHS Identifier:** DaRT ID: 208521

#### **Categories**

Collections - Manuscript - History - Indian - Ledger art  
Community Life - Arts and Entertainment - Art - American Indian  
Community Life - Arts and Entertainment - Art - Drawing  
Curriculum - 7th Grade Standards - Kansas History Standards - 1860s to 1870s  
(Benchmark 3) - Fed. Gov. and Indian lands (Indicator 1) - Cheyenne  
Curriculum - 7th Grade Standards - Kansas History Standards - 1860s to 1870s  
(Benchmark 3) - Fed. Gov. and Indian lands (Indicator 1) - Indian reservations  
Curriculum - 7th Grade Standards - Kansas History Standards - 1860s to 1870s  
(Benchmark 3) - Fed. Gov. and Indian lands (Indicator 1) - Last Indian raid in Kansas  
Date - 1870s - 1879  
Military - Wars - Indian Wars  
Objects and Artifacts - Communication Artifacts - Original Art - Drawing  
People - American Indians - Tribes - Cheyenne  
Places - Cities and towns - Dodge City  
Places - Counties - Ford  
Thematic Time Period - Immigration and Settlement, 1854 - 1890  
Type of Material - Art objects - Original art - Drawings  
Type of Material - Art objects - Original art - Ledger art  
Type of Material – Illustrations

### **“Drawings by Northern Cheyenne Indians”**

**Item Number:** 208508

**Call Number:** Indian History Coll. #590, Box 2 Folder 22

**KSHS Identifier:** DaRT ID: 208508

#### **Categories**

Collections - Manuscript - History - Indian - Ledger art  
Community Life - Arts and Entertainment - Art - American Indian  
Community Life - Arts and Entertainment - Art - Drawing  
Date - 1870s - 1879  
Military - Wars - Indian Wars  
Objects and Artifacts - Communication Artifacts - Original Art - Drawing  
People - American Indians - Tribes - Cheyenne



Places - Cities and towns - Dodge City  
Places - Counties - Ford  
Thematic Time Period - Immigration and Settlement, 1854 - 1890  
Type of Material - Art objects - Original art - Drawings  
Type of Material - Art objects - Original art - Ledger art  
Type of Material – Illustrations

### **“Modern Ledger Art Painting”**

**Item Number:** 223476

**KSHS Identifier:** 2007.28.1

#### **Categories**

Business and Industry - Occupations/Professions - Artists  
Collections - Museum  
Community Life - Arts and Entertainment - Art - American Indian  
Community Life - Arts and Entertainment - Art - Artists  
Community Life - Arts and Entertainment - Art - Drawing  
Date - 2000s - 2007  
Objects and Artifacts - Communication Artifacts - Original Art - Drawing  
People - American Indians  
Places - Cities and towns - Topeka  
Places - Counties - Shawnee  
Type of Material - Objects and Artifacts

### **“Cheyenne Indian Drawing”**

**Item Number:** 211158

**Call Number:** Indian Histoy Coll. #590, Box 2 Folder 22

**KSHS Identifier:** DaRT ID: 211158

#### **Categories**

Collections - Manuscript - History - Indian - Ledger art  
Community Life - Arts and Entertainment - Art - American Indian  
Community Life - Arts and Entertainment - Art - Drawing  
Date - 1870s  
Military - Wars - Indian Wars  
Objects and Artifacts - Communication Artifacts - Original Art - Drawing  
People - American Indians - Indian removal  
People - American Indians - Tribes - Cheyenne  
Type of Material - Art objects - Original art - Drawings  
Type of Material - Art objects - Original art - Ledger art  
Type of Material – Illustrations

## **“Cheyenne Indian Drawing”**

**Item Number:** 211157

**Call Number:** Indian History Coll. #590, Box 2 Folder 22

**KSHS Identifier:** DaRT ID: 211157

### **Categories**

Collections - Manuscript - History - Indian - Ledger art

Community Life - Arts and Entertainment - Art - American Indian

Community Life - Arts and Entertainment - Art - Drawing

Date - 1870s

Military - Wars - Indian Wars

Objects and Artifacts - Communication Artifacts - Original Art - Drawing

People - American Indians - Indian removal

People - American Indians - Tribes - Cheyenne

Type of Material - Art objects - Original art - Drawings

Type of Material - Art objects - Original art - Ledger art

Type of Material - Illustrations

## APPENDIX B

### Exhibition Facts as provided by Smithsonian Institution.

- Curated by Emil Her Many Horses (Oglala Lakota), the exhibition reflects more than three years of research
- 4,000-square-foot exhibition is in the museum's East Gallery
- 76 objects total: 17 historic works and 59 contemporary works
- Nearly all of the contemporary works will be exhibited to the public for the first time: 50 works commissioned exclusively for the exhibition; seven works acquired for the exhibition; two works already in the museum's collection
- Historic figures/artists are: Long Soldier (Lakota/Nakota); Mountain Chief (Blackfeet); Bear's Heart (Southern Cheyenne); Zotom (Kiowa); Chief Washakie (Shoshone); Canté-wani'ca, or No Heart (Yanktonai); Spotted Tail (Apsáalooke [Crow]); Ćehu'pa or Jaw (Hunkpapa Lakota); Black Chicken (Yanktonai); Rain in the Face (Hunkpapa Lakota); Old Buffalo, or Old Bull (Lakota)
- Contemporary artists are: Ronald Burgess (Comanche); Sherman Chaddlesone (Kiowa); David Dragonfly (Blackfeet/Assiniboiné); Lauren Good Day Giago (Arikara/Hidatsa/Blackfeet/Plains Cree); Darryl Growing Thunder (Assiniboiné/Sioux); Juanita Growing Thunder-Fogarty (Assiniboiné/Sioux); Terrance Guardipee (Blackfeet); Vanessa Jennings (Kiowa/Pima); Dallin Maybee (Northern Arapaho/Seneca); Chester Medicine Crow (Apsáalooke [Crow]); Chris Pappan (Osage/Kaw/Cheyenne River Lakota); Joel Pulliam (Oglala Lakota); Martin E. Red Bear (Oglala/Sicangu Lakota); Norman Frank Sheridan (Southern Cheyenne/Arapaho); Dwayne Wilcox (Oglala Lakota); Jim Yellowhawk (Cheyenne River Lakota)
- Exhibition features interactive STQRY app for mobile devices, providing visitors with unique digital content, including 21 audio stories that provide additional curatorial information and personal perspective from many of the artists themselves
- Exhibition has four main sections: Introduction; From Past to Present; Warrior Art; Contemporary Expressions; and an additional discovery room

## APPENDIX C

### General conversation questions for artists. Chris Pappan example.

1. Can I use your name rather than an alias because I'd really like to give you credit for your words? And may I use quotations in this conversation in my dissertation project?
2. I read on the STQRY App, which I'd like to talk about in a few minutes, that you happened upon ledger drawings at your "day job," and so started creating ledger art. Can you tell me more about that?
3. If you were to define ledger art, how would you define it?
4. How did you first become involved with the *Unbound* exhibit?
5. I remember at the Curator's Talk, you mentioned that your work is a mix between tradition and voice, and that it speaks to a sort of double-consciousness. Could you tell me a little bit more about that approach?
6. How do you see the materials that you use and the drawings and paintings interacting with one another?
7. I'm currently working with the ledger drawings held at the Kansas archives. I don't have to wear gloves and there are these stories in my hands and on my fingertips. Do you think the materiality of ledger drawings is important? When you're creating or exhibiting it?
8. What gets lost when the drawings are placed into a glass frame?
9. On that topic, what do you think about the way past and present pieces were placed into conversation with each other around the exhibit space?
10. Are ledger drawings somehow connected or related to each other? How might you see that?
11. Do you see your drawings and the physical space they're exhibited in as related in some way?
12. What happens when the work—in an exhibit or an archive, is removed from...context?
13. How do you see your work acting on people? Affecting them?

## APPENDIX D

### APPROVAL OF PROTOCOL

June 21, 2016

Chelsea Murdock  
CJMurdock@ku.edu

Dear Chelsea Murdock:

On 6/21/2016, the IRB reviewed the following submission:

Type of Review: Initial Study

Title of Study: Drawing the Lines: Indigenous American Ledger  
Drawings and the Decolonization of Rhetorical  
Knowledge Spaces

Investigator: Chelsea Murdock

IRB ID: STUDY00004267

Funding: None

Grant ID: None

Documents Reviewed: • Murdock\_OralConsent, • Murdock\_IRBform

The IRB approved the study on 6/21/2016.

1. Notify HSCL about any new investigators not named in the original application. Note that new investigators must take the online tutorial at [https://rgs.drupal.ku.edu/human\\_subjects\\_compliance\\_training](https://rgs.drupal.ku.edu/human_subjects_compliance_training).
2. Any injury to a subject because of the research procedure must be reported immediately.
3. When signed consent documents are required, the primary investigator must retain the signed consent documents for at least three years past completion of the research activity. Continuing review is not required for this project, however you are required to report any significant changes to the protocol prior to altering the project.

Please note university data security and handling requirements for your project:

<https://documents.ku.edu/policies/IT/DataClassificationandHandlingProceduresGuide.htm>

You must use the final, watermarked version of the consent form, available under the "Documents" tab in eCompliance.

Sincerely,  
Stephanie Dyson Elms, MPA  
IRB Administrator, KU Lawrence Campus

## APPENDIX E

Permissions to use images from the Smithsonian Flickr page.

Hi Chelsea. Thanks for reaching out. Any of the images in that album you can use for your dissertation. The appropriate credits should be there already. Let me know if any don't have them or need more info for an image.

**Joshua Voda**, Public Affairs Specialist

Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian, George Gustav Heye Center

**Mailing Address:** One Bowling Green, Room 186, New York, NY 10004

